Stourbridge
CHRONICLE

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SPEEDING DRIVER WHO KILLED GEORGIE IS JAILED FOR SIX YEARS

Georgie Evans - died at scene

A MOTORIST who killed an 18-year-old Himley woman in an horrific road crash after hitting speeds of up to 100mph is starting a six year jail sentence.

Polish immigrant Kuba Oles was travelling so fast when his Audi A6 hurtled into Georgie Evans' Ford Fiesta that her car was torn in half, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

Witnesses estimated he had been travelling at up to 100mph in a 30 limit when tragedy struck moments after two other drivers remarked he was 'going to kill somebody', revealed Mr Paul Spratt, prosecuting.

The court was told the crash happened less than a month after Oles was reported to police for dangerous driving.

The Audi had narrowly missed a bus as the 24-year-old driver momentarily lost control on a roundabout before accelerating in Priory Road, Dudley, on October 27. A van driver he then overtook estimated that the car was doing at least 80mph in the 30mph zone as it passed him – and ploughed into Miss Evans seconds later.

Experts who viewed footage from CCTV cameras in the area agreed with the 80mph estimate and pointed out that the Audi was still accelerating.

The victim was driving correctly and turning into the road at a junction.

Mr Spratt said: "The impact was so significant that the other vehicle split in two. It led to her suffering such significant injury that it is highly likely Georgie died immediately."

Oles did not hand himself into the police until 18 hours later, making it impossible for him to be checked for drink and drugs.

Oles, from Beaconview Road, West Bromwich, who came to this country in 2013, pleaded guilty to causing death by dangerous driving, leaving the scene and failing to report an accident. He also admitted the earlier incident of dangerous driving. He was jailed for six years with an extended four year licence period and banned from driving for 14 years.

Kuba Oles – jailed

Ofsted calls for improvements after inspection

STANDARDS WILL RISE, VOWS HEAD

SUMMERHILL School in Kingswinford has been told it must improve, after concerns were raised by inspectors.

The secondary school, which has more than 1,000 pupils, was given a 'requires improvement' by school inspectors Ofsted.

The new headteacher admitted there was work to do but insisted he could turn its fortunes around.

Ofsted said pupils' progress had declined since the last inspection and teaching was 'sometimes weak'. However, the education regulator suggested it had confidence in new head James Bowkett, saying he had 'successfully created and shared his vision for the school'.

Mr Bowkett said he was not surprised by the outcome of the inspection, having only recently taken over, but was confident standards would now begin to improve.

He said: "When I arrived, it was clear that the foundations of a superb school were in place but also there was work to be done since the performance of the school had not been as good as it should have been.

"We told the inspection team we believed we required improvement and they agreed with us.

Signs

"We were able to assure the lead inspector and the team that, from recent evaluation, we knew our school very well, had identified all issues that required improvement, and could already show the first signs of improvement.

"We had already put plans in place to address the identified issues to very rapidly accelerate Summerhill, firstly towards its rightful place as the undoubted best school in the area, and then onwards beyond outstanding."

The Lodge Lane school has a total of 1,016 pupil.

The Ofsted report said: "The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable, and is sometimes weak. Senior leaders know that there is work to do to reduce the inconsistencies that exist.

"Teachers often do not adapt learning strategies carefully enough to suit the needs of pupils. "Pupils, such as those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, sometimes find their work too hard to do, which limits their achievements.

"Other pupils, particularly the most able, are provided with insufficient challenge, which slows their rates of progress."

Despite the concerns, Ofsted also raised positive aspects of Summerhill's performance, such as the behaviour of children and the relationship between teachers and pupils. It said attendance levels were good and exclusions rare.

The report stated: "Pupils behave well. There is a culture of strong, positive relationships between pupils and adults, and among pupils, which supports learning well."

Mr Bowkett added: "We are very pleased that Ofsted recognised the many positive aspects of Summerhill School."

Report by Richard Guttridge

Pride despite defeat and flare shame

The flare sends clouds of orange smoke across the Adams Park pitch, briefly halting play

AFTER Stourbridge FC's cup dream was cruelly smashed in the dying minutes of the match at High Wycombe on Saturday the club could face a major problem due to the actions of one fan.

Two thousand fans travelled to the third round FA Cup clash with Wycombe Wanderers, one of the biggest games in the club's history. The club were denied a replay with a late goal for Wycombe but fans have told of their pride at the performance.

But the game had to be briefly halted around the half-hour mark after a flare was lobbed onto the pitch from the away end and started spewing orange smoke. A fan was ejected from Adams Park.

The Glassboys were already facing an FA charge after a flare was thrown onto the pitch after Jack Duggan's winning goal in the second round tie against Northampton Town.

● Pride of the Black Country – pages 8 and 36

TRANSPORT

£550,000 bus station revamp is to start

THE £550,000 upgrade to Merry Hill bus station will start on Monday

The revamp of the shopping centre bus station is being carried out by centre owners intu and Transport for West Midlands, part of the West Midlands Combined Authority.

The station refit is due to be completed by late spring and during this time the car park near Matalan will be partially closed.

The investment acknowledges the high number of shoppers who arrive at the shopping centre by bus, which intu says is as high as one in five.

The renovated bus station will feature real-time information boards and new enclosed shelters with covered walkways.

FUNDING

£1.5m park project moves step closer

CAMPAIGNERS are closer to securing a £1.5 million lottery boost which could see a cafe created and bandstand revamped at Stevens Park in Quarry Bank.

The park, off Thorns Road, has reached the second stage of bids for the Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery Fund.

The money could be used to make a number of improvements including the restoration of the Whitehouse building on Park Road to include a cafe.

PLANNING

Replacement of care home backed

PROPOSALS to demolish a care home and build a 66-bed home next to the site in Kingswinford have been recommended for approval by council planners.

The new care home is planned beside New Bradley Hall, off Compton Drive, which will be torn down once the new build is finished and residents moved across.

A 5,000-name petition previously halted closure of New Bradley Hall after Dudley Council said it could no longer afford to run it. The home and jobs were transferred to not-for-profit organisation Black Country Housing Group, who say the existing home is no longer fit for purpose.

INSIDE

FIRM BACKS BLUEBIRD BID

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Driver admits causing death of teenager

Crash victim Nadine Foster

A MAN has admitted causing the death of a Stourbridge teenage mother by dangerous driving.

Dylan Stringer had been driving at a minimum of 78mph through Oldswinford immediately before the crash on Hagley Road, Wolverhampton Crown Court was told. Former Dudley College student Nadine Foster, 18, was a passenger in a Ford Focus being driven by Stringer when it crashed into a wall in the early hours of April 16. She was taken to hospital but died later.

Stringer, of Wychbury Road, Stourbridge, pleaded guilty to causing Miss Foster's death by dangerous driving at Wolverhampton Crown Court on January 4.

Mr Paul Spratt, prosecuting, said the 23-year-old had been driving at a minimum of 78mph before the crash.

During the 10 minute hearing Stringer spoke only to confirm his name and enter his plea. He faces two further charges of causing death by driving when unlicensed and causing death by driving when uninsured. He was not asked to enter pleas to those counts.

Judge Simon Ward told him: "I am not going to sentence you today. I want to know more about you than I do now." Mr Richard Butcher, defending Stringer, said his client had suffered several injuries himself in the crash.

Joseph Chance, 25, of Murcroft Road, Stourbridge, is also accused of causing Miss Foster's death by dangerous driving. He did not enter a plea and his case was adjourned until today (Friday). He is also charged with causing death by driving when unlicensed and when uninsured. Both men were granted bail on condition they do not contact each other.

Zoo bosses are just wild over £275k plans

DUDLEY Zoo's farm and four of the enclosures are in line for a revamp costing £275,000 to bring visitors even closer to the animals.

Chief executive of the Castle Hill attraction, Derek Grove, has revealed details of major work planned during 2017 as part of its five-year re-development programme.

Each of the projects aims to give the creatures more space at the same time as giving visitors a better view of them, regardless of whether the animals are outside or taking shelter inside.

The zoo has also unveiled a new logo ahead of its 80th year reflecting the animals, Dudley Castle, the ancient wooded hillside and its Modernist Tecton structures.

Mr Grove, said: "We wanted a logo that people could easily recognise as being Dudley Zoo and Rachel Lane's design, which was voted for by our staff members, should do just that by incorporating all the important elements generally associated with the site."

Viewing

The biggest scheme planned for next year, costing £100,000, is work to increase the size of the snow leopard enclosure, which is due to be completed by the summer.

By extending the one side of the existing exhibit, bosses will also be raising the height of the enclosure and the viewing area due to the gradient of the land.

Mr Grove said this would give visitors to the zoo, which celebrates its 80th anniversary this year, better opportunities to see the cats.

"Snow leopards, like all animals, like to be up high but this means they can be harder to spot," he explained. "All the work we are doing its about giving the animals better facilities and making sure our visitors can see them.

"We know that if visitors come on a wet day they might not be able to see many animals because they are all taking shelter in the warmth. This is a double negative and that's why it's that we ensure that from the minute they get to Dudley Zoo they are seeing animals", he added.

Dudley Zoo chief executive Derek Grove with a sketch of the £100,000 plan for the snow leopard enclosure

There also plans to improve facilities for younger visitors by extending the farmyard which is popular with children and their families. A new barn will also be built as part of the scheme which will cost £90,000 and be completed by Easter.

Mr Grove said: "The farm has always been very popular but it's very old. We want to have a barn which is two and a half times bigger and have more space for the farmyard.

"It's all about giving our young visitors a better experience. They are far more interested in holding a chick or stroking a rabbit than they are seeing a lion lying down a distance away.

"It's really important that we cater for age ranges. We know people who came to the zoo as children, then they brought their own children and now they are bringing their grandchildren."

The other projects include a new parrot aviary which will cost £40,000 and will be completed by Whitsun. The three existing small aviaries, which date back to the 1980s, will be replaced with a much larger single aviary.

The final scheme is the small cat enclosure which will be completed by Easter.

The money for the projects is coming from zoo funds which is raised through entrance costs as well as animal experiences, donations, events and the animal adoption packages.

Closure of hospital ward will not now take place

A MOVE to close a ward at Russells Hall Hospital was abandoned because of the increasing demand on the hospital's accident and emergency department, health chiefs have revealed.

The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust had planned to shut Ward A1 and reduce temporary staff numbers as part of more than 50 cost-cutting schemes but then faced an 'unprecedented' level of demand over the Christmas period.

Instead of being closed, the ward has instead been converted into a new GP-led rehabilitation facility called The Evergreen Unit.

More than 600 patients poured into A&E at Russells Hall every day over the Christmas and New Year period.

Through the ward closure and other money saving initiatives the trust was looking to save a total of more than £11.9 million over the financial year 2016/17, but they now expect the savings to be closer to £10.2 million.

Hospital bosses also disclosed that planned savings have been hit by a delay in introducing new medical equipment.

Dr Paul Harrison, acting chief executive, said: "We have 57 individual Cost Improvement Programme schemes underway which aim to improve patient care and experience, whilst also ensuring good value for money. So far this year, projects have saved the trust £6.8m. By the end of the financial year, we expect the saving to be £10.2m.

"Some of our projects have not yet made the level of savings we anticipated."

Choir evening to attract new voices

A STOURBRIDGE-based choir which is is looking for new singers to boost its ranks is holding an open evening on Tuesday.

Viva Musica Choir will hold the event at Ham Dingle Primary School, in Pedmore, from 7.30pm.

Viva Musica has been performing for more than 25 years, led by musical director Rosemary Phillips.

The choir of around 70 mixed voices, accompanied by Andrew Biggs, has hosted concerts with special guests including Alfie Boe, Wynne Evans and Amore.

The choir has performed at Symphony Hall, Birmingham, and at Worcester Cathedral, and supports charities. For more details visit the www.viva-musica.co.uk website.

History society to meet at arts centre

THE next meeting of the Amblecote History Society Next will take place on Wednesday, January 18.

It will be held in the Lehr Theatre at The Ruskin Glasshouse Arts Centre in Amblecote at 7.30pm. David Berry will be speaking at the event. Admission £2.

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Pensioner is left shaken after robbers tied him up

A PENSIONER had his hands tied by masked robbers who raided his home in Dudley, stealing a First World War medal.

The criminals struck at the 79-year-old's home in Wren's Nest, just minutes before the arrival of the New Year.

Police have now launched an appeal for information in a bid to catch the raiders.

The resident was awoken by noises just before midnight on New Year's Eve. When he opened his back door to investigate he was grabbed by two masked men who pushed him back inside the house.

He was held in the corner of the living room by one of the men, who tied his hands behind his back, while the second searched through drawers and cupboards for valuables.

A war medal was taken and a bundle of £50 notes that are no longer legal tender.

The elderly homeowner was released as the men left the property.

Detective Constable Gareth Homer said: "This was a really nasty incident which left the homeowner very shaken. We are carrying out thorough investigations but anyone with any information is asked to call 101."

The first suspect was describd as a white man, around 5ft 7ins to 5ft 8ins tall, slim, aged in his 20s and wearing a hat and mask. The second suspect was also a white man, around 5ft 6ins tall, of slim build and wearing a hat and mask.

Work is well under way on new HQ

WORK is pressing ahead with the construction of a multi-million-pound corporate head office for a major Black Country manufacturing firm.

The structure of Thomas Dudley's new premises is now up at Ionic Park off the Birmingham New Road.

Work is expected to be completed on the three-storey building by August.

The company which produces castings and top quality bathroom fittings was founded in the 1920s by the Dudley family, and is still owned by them nearly 100 years later.

It employs around 350 people, but the company had outgrown its current office block on the Birmingham New Road which dates back to the 1970s.

The new development will include a showroom and training facilities.

Wordsmiths meet at Old Coach House

WORDSMITHS are invited to attend sessions developing their skills. The Coachhouse writers meet on Tuesdays, noon to 1.30pm, at the Old Coach House in Oldswinford. The next session is on January 27.

Former staff help revive service for elderly

Springboard party may not be the last

ACTIVITY sessions for the elderly in Dudley have been saved thanks to former bosses ploughing their own money into a new venture.

The generous move follows the closure of a popular Age UK centre, which left hundreds of elderly residents from across Dudley without a place to go after it said farewell with a big Christmas party.

The Springboard Activity Centre in Brierley Hill was axed last month after funding was pulled by the Big Lottery and Dudley Council.

Now former employee Sandy Jones has set up 'Bounce Back...to health & happiness' – with her own money.

A variety of activities, courses, trips and social events for people aged 50 and over in the Black Country will be on offer four days a week at the same prices as before – £2.50 to £5 per session.

Two of the Springboard's redundant staff have set up Bounce Back, which will operate from St Paul', in Hawbush Road, and Quarry Bank Community Centre.

Sandy Jones, managing director, said: "Most of the people who attended the old centre are over the moon that we have been able to provide an alternative for them.

"Our oldest person was a hundred years old in the summer and for some of them, we were the only personal contact they had all week.

"I would have been willing to give up my redundancy pay to enable them to avoid loneliness and isolation."

Regular classes started on Monday. For further information on the 'Bounce Back' call 07491 312825 or email bounceback2017@hotmail.com for costs and details.

Family's plea as woman dies after fall from car

A YOUNG woman from Quarry Bank has died after falling from the bonnet of a car driven outside a supermarket in Dudley.

The family of 20-year-old Ellie Underhill have spoken of their devastation at their 'beautiful' daughter's death, and are appealing for more information about the incident that claimed her life.

Ellie lost her life eight days after the fall on Boxing Day. Three people have since been arrested for manslaughter and conspiracy to pervert the course of justice. An 18-year-old man and 18-year-old woman, both from Stourbridge, and a 19-year-old man, also from Stourbridge, have all been bailed until March 29 while inquiries continue. The fall happened on the car park of the Tesco Extra store, at Burnt Tree at around 10.30pm.

Her family have paid tribute to a 'bubbly, lively girl' as they appealed for information.

Police also appealed for help from people inside a dark blue three-door VW Golf, which was in the car park playing loud music, and occupants of a small red Peugeot with a spoiler on the rear.

Injury

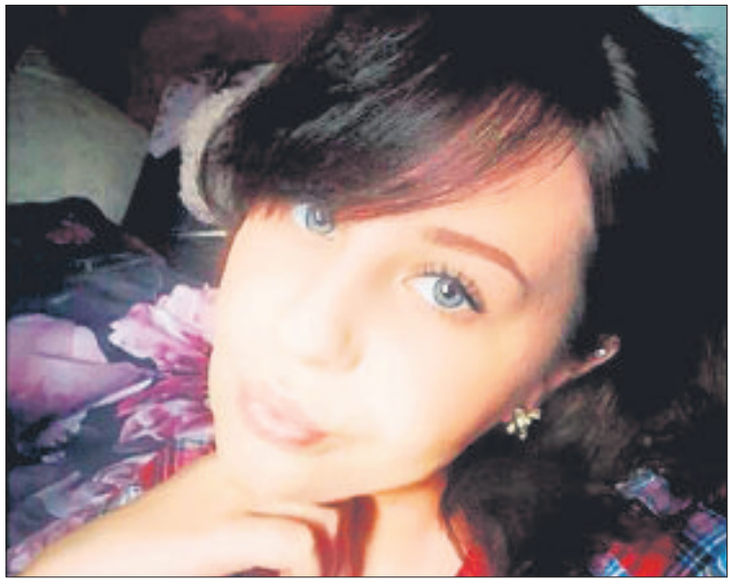
Detectives believe Ellie was on the bonnet of a silver Vauxhall Corsa which was being driven in the car park at the supermarket, off Birmingham Road, at around 10.30pm on Boxing Day.

Moments later she fell and suffered a head injury. The 20-year-old was taken by friends to Russells Hall Hospital but she failed to recover and died from her injuries on January 3. That was the same day that West Midlands Police were informed of the incident.

Her family said in a statement: "Our beautiful daughter Eleanor Jane Underhill was such a bubbly, lively girl and the life and soul of everything; she truly lived life to the fullest. We are totally devastated and really need to find out the truth of what happened that night. If anybody has any information about how Eleanor came to suffer her injuries, no matter how insignificant or small they believe that information to be, please get in contact with the police."

Sergeant Alan Wood, from the Regional Collision Investigation Unit, said: "This is a tragic incident and our thoughts are with the family at this time. There were a number of people in the car park at the time. I would urge anyone who has any information to come forward."

Contact Sgt Wood by calling 101 ext 843 6046 or email FL_COLLISION_INVEST@west-midland.pnn.police.uk



Ellie Underhill fell from the bonnet of a car being driven on the car park of Tesco Extra at Burnt Tree

Massive court bill for owner of dirty cafe

THE owner of a filthy cafe in Brierley Hill has been hit with a court bill for more than £2,600.

Wend's Cafe on the Starcrest Industrial Estate was found to have dirty plates, cutlery and surfaces along with crumbling ceilings and no handwash basin in the toilet.

Wolverhampton Magistrates Court heard that Lee Beddall took on the cafe for a less stressful life but soon realised he had made a big mistake.

Beddall, aged 46, of Wollaston Road, Amblecote, pleaded guilty to nine charges of failing to comply with requirements for a food business. He will now have to clean up his cafe, which remains open, before inspectors return for their next visit.

Defence solicitor Mandeep Bassi told the court: "He believed the cafe would be a less stressful way to earn a living, but now feels it was the worst decision he has ever made. He has tried to make it work and is doing his best. If he could, he would give up the cafe tomorrow, but nobody wants to buy it from him."

Magistrates fined him £1,750 and ordered to pay £800 in court costs and £175 victim surcharge.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Councillor steps down from role

A DUDLEY councillor has resigned from her position, citing personal reasons.

Glenis Simms, who represented St Thomas' ward, said she had taken the 'very difficult' decision to stand down.

The 42-year-old made headlines in 2014 when she defected to Labour from the Conservatives.

"Being a councillor has given me a great opportunity to do what I love best, which is to try and help other people who are in need," she said.

The decision will spark a by-election in the ward.

Decision due over school site homes

A FINAL decision on whether a school will be knocked down to make way for a development of homes is expected to be made this week.

Plans to put 27 homes on the site of Holt Farm Primary School in Halesowen have been submitted.

The development has been recommended for approval but a decision was put off at the last meeting of Dudley Council's planning committee to allow members to visit the site.

The site has been disused since the primary school shut its doors for the last time in 2006.

80 jobs at risk as firm faces crisis

EIGHTY jobs in West Bromwich are at risk after a £12 million-turnover manufacturer called in administrators.

The administrators were appointed at Colson Castors and Castors International on December 29.

The business has 85 employees with all but five based at the main manufacturing site in Hill Top, West Bromwich. The others are at Christchurch, near Bournemouth. Options for the business are being assessed.

Flat and garages plan at site of abattoir

A FORMER abattoir is to be converted into a flat and garages, if plans are approved.

An application has been submitted to Dudley Council to demolish the former slaughterhouse off Quarry Bank High Street.

The two-bedroom flat will be over three garages, with access off Chapel Street.

The former abattoir has not been used for around 30 years, says nearby workers.

Snowdrops on agenda

ASHWOOD Nurseries near Kinver will be hosting a talk on snowdrops.

Eddie Roberts will give the lecture with a garden tour on February 7.

Tickets are priced at £20 each including refreshments.

Booking is on essential by calling (01384) 401996.

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES

YES, there is a lot of it about. Sniffles, cough, headache and, just when you think you've shaken it off, it comes back again. I couldn't help noticing at a party recently how some of the cheeks one kissed were burning hot. As this winter's dreaded lurgy continues, I foresee a return of Hollywood-style contactless air-kissing. Mwah, mwah, darlings.

WALKING down the street into an oncoming stream of shoppers (including me), a man wearing earphones was holding his laptop in front of him at eye-level and conducting a Skype conversation with somebody, at full volume. This incident proved that communal wishing does not work. Everyone in that street was thinking: "Go on, you idiot, walk into a lamppost," but the Skype merchant missed them all.

AT least the old 19th century houses were easy to take down. I spent one summer as a labourer on the demolition of a huge Regency villa. There was no need to use a demolition ball, nor even a hammer or chisel. We simply lifted every brick by hand. There was no adhesive power in the powdery old mortar and the only thing holding each course of bricks in place was the weight of the bricks above. A bricklayer told me the old buildings remained standing only because all the woodworms were holding hands.

TV dramas are filmed months before they are screened. So the makers of Halcyon (ITV) must have watched in horror a few weeks ago as Close to the Enemy (BBC1) was broadcast. Note the startling similarities between the two offerings. Same setting, in a 1940s hotel. Same atmosphere of conspiracy about the reasons for the Second World War. Same jazz band with sexy chanteuse. And to cap it all, both dramas had the actress Charity Wakefield playing a blonde femme fatale. Both series were about spies. So who's been spying on whom . . ?

AS a fully paid-up guardian of Joe Public against the monstrous forces of government, I should be outraged at the news of new powers allowing Whitehall departments to share individuals' details with local councils. I find myself strangely unoutraged. If Mr J Public is pleading poverty to the town hall to get benefits but HMRC knows he is a millionaire, the sooner the taxman has a word with the town clerk, the better. In any case, didn't we all assume they were sharing information already?

I SAW this scrawled on a wall this week: "Carrie is a grass." Don't you find it strangely reassuring that in the age of cyber-crime and DNA profiling, our criminal-justice system still has a place for the good old-fashioned copper's nark?

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

Centre could be ready ahead of schedule

A LONG-AWAITED community centre is nearing completion, and could even be finished ahead of schedule.

Latest pictures reveal that the main structure of Dudley's North Priory Community Centre, being built near to the Donkey Pool playing fields, off Priory Road, has been erected. It is looking like the community centre could be open ahead of the council's May deadline.

Any earlier date would be welcome news to the many residents who have been calling for such a facility for nearly 10 years, after the previous centre was demolished.

Leading that campaign has been Councillor Ken Finch, who represents the Castle and Priory ward. He said: "I am delighted. It's well on its way to being completed in May as planned and within budget.

"Speaking to those working on the site it sounds like it may even be ready before that. I think it's getting built quicker because the contractors know that this project is for the community, and how important the building is to the community."

Councillor Finch is also pleased that donations of furniture have already been offered by Dudley College and Dudley Council.

Work is under way on the centre

Families are breaking rules to scatter ashes

By Richard Guttridge

FAMILIES have been 'illegally' scattering ashes of their loved ones in gardens of remembrance to avoid paying the £51 charge.

Council bosses revealed they had seen an increase in people going into the memorial gardens at Gornal Wood and Stourbridge Crematoriums and scattering ashes, which is not allowed.

Families can pay to witness cremated remains of relatives being scattered in the gardens but it is thought some are taking it on themselves as they believe the cost is too steep.

It has led to fears families are being priced out of services as it was also revealed some were turning down the opportunity to witness burials of their relatives' ashes, with the cost again thought to be the reason.

Freeze

Council chiefs have even admitted the £51 charge is 'very high' and have decided to freeze it for 2017.

Other bereavement fees have increased but council bosses have become concerned with the growing trend of people scattering ashes.

A council report said: "The fee currently is very high and is deterring people from being present at the time of their loved ones' burials and interments into the columbarium niches.

"We are also seeing an increase in illegal scattering of cremated remains in our gardens of remembrance, which is potentially due to people not wishing to pay the witness fee and so they scatter the remains themselves. Further increases could see more instances of this occurring and so a freeze on this fee is recommended."

Councillor Khurshid Ahmed said: "We always strongly recommend people do not scatter ashes there. For future generations there won't be any records of where their relative was laid to rest."

Dahlia for Duncan is a blooming marvel

Manchester United fan Lee Jackson with his Hillcrest Duncan Edwards dahlias

A HORTICULTURALIST has spent 50 years perfecting a red dahlia as a personal tribute to the late footballing legend Duncan Edwards – which even caught the eye of former Manchester United boss Sir Alex Ferguson.

United fan Les Jackson was horrified as a teenager in 1958 when the Munich air disaster claimed the lives of eight of the famous 'Busby Babes' team, including Dudley-born Edwards.

Later green-fingered Mr Jackson, now 74 and from Carlisle, decided to create his own special tribute to the talented player, who was cut down in his prime aged 21.

Mr Jackson spent more than half a century creating the perfect flower, determined that it needed to have a football-sized bloom, flawless symmetry and a rich red colour which would not fade.

"I saw Duncan Edwards play, he was a big strapping lad. He had legs like tree trunks at 15, they thought he was going to be a rugby player. So there would have been no use me putting out a lanky dahlia.

"The dahlia had to be strong, with a bloom as big as a football, it had to be the right colour of red which Manchester United should always play in. The key word for me was that it had to be a one-off, with nothing out there like it."

Mr Jackson unveiled The Hillcrest Duncan Edwards – Hillcrest being his signature – in 2009 and it has gone on to win several awards. Mr Jackson also received a letter of congratulation from Sir Alex Ferguson.

Company's moulding division is on the move

DUDLEY'S growing and ambitious Petford Group has bought a new site in Lye to house its moulding division in a new factory.

Managing director Mel Sinar said that the business, which is one of the country's leading tool makers and injection moulders, was investing £1.5 million in the new project.

The purchase of the four-acre site of a former Controlled Heat Treatments works in Mears Coppice was completed just before the group shut for Christmas.

Mr Sinar said that the move of the moulding division to its new home would also mean the creation of 15 new jobs.

"We plan to start building in the new year and hopefully move in in August," he added.

He said the extra space was needed due to the continued growth and expansion of the company and would enable Petford to continue supporting its customers and further grow order books.

A new 38,000 sq ft facility is to be built on the former CHT site and the fresh investment follows £8m that was invested in 2016 to support growth.

The group currently employs 130 between its head office in Peartree Lane and its other site in Station Drive, Brierley Hill, which currently houses its moulding operation.

The manufacturer, which was formed in 1970, will continue to carry out automotive tool manufacturing at its current site.

Boardrooms need more women – MP

STOURBRIDGE MP Margot James says the Government supports calls to increase the number of women in the boardrooms at blue chip companies.

Ms James, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, said the Government wants to see female representation on the boards at FTSE 350 firms hit 33 per cent by 2020.

In Parliament business questions the Conservative MP said: "The proportion of women on FTSE 100 boards has increased from 12.5 per cent in 2011 to 27 per cent.

"Since 2011, the number of women on FTSE 350 boards has more than doubled to 23.5 per cent.

"We support the business-led target of 33 per cent of those on FTSE 350 boards being women by 2020."

Concern as cars are targeted by vandals

CARS have been targeted by vandals in Wordsley in recent weeks.

Windows have been smashed and wing mirrors broken as yobs caused damage in the Lawnswood Road area. The vandalism has been reported to the police.

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Towpaths in line for a £125,000 makeover

A STRETCH of canal will undergo £125,000 worth of improvements in the latest part of a scheme to transform towpaths.

A section running from Seven Dwellings Bridge to Black Delph Bridge in Brierley Hill is next in line for a towpath makeover.

Canals have been spruced up across the Dudley borough as part of a £1.7 million revamp aimed at encouraged more people to walk and cycle along them.

Work has been taking place this year on a £460,000 project between Kinver Street Basin in Wordsley and Buckpool Nature Reserve and The Dell Stadium area in Pensnett.

It also follows improvements on the towpaths in Stourbridge near the Bonded Warehouse.

Dudley Council has now secured an extra £180,000 from the Government's Local Growth Fund to work on the next stretch of canal, as part of a drive to get more people using the paths.

The area running to Brierley Hill is part of a National Cycle Network route and health chiefs are keen to make the waterside walkways more inviting.The council has put £1.34m towards the overall scheme.

Chiefs said they had seen more people using the paths since the project began.

The latest stage of the work has been authorised by Councillor Hilary Bills, cabinet member for environmental services, in a move to encourage even more people to walk or cycle.

Safety advice is offered to elderly

SUPPORT is available to help older residents live well and feel safe in their homes across the borough.

Dudley Council has teamed up with Age UK Dudley, West Midlands Police, Victim Support and West Midlands Fire Service to offer practical safety, security and wellbeing advice to residents in their own home.

An officer from the partnership visits residents to give advice on a range of issues. They get the appropriate services to contact the person to offer help. The scheme includes providing home and personal alarms, sheltered and supported housing options, falls support and advice, home improvement help and adaptations, handyman service and fire safety advice. Call (01384) 817743.

Cut-price boat trips into caverns

DUDLEY Canal Trust is discounting its 45-minute boat trips into the limestone caverns under the town from Monday. Trips from The Portal at Birmingham New Road cost £3 from 10.30am to 3pm. Call 0121 557 6265.

Drug addict went on a wrecking spree

A DRUG addict who smashed up four fruit machines after breaking into a pub – before going on to break into a nearby factory unit just weeks later – has been given a six-month community order.

Alexander McDonald, aged 28, of Lye, broke into The Chequers Inn, a Wetherspoon pub in Stourbridge town centre, on September 27.

Then on November 13, he smashed a window and climbed into the Customark factory unit on the Hayes trading estate, Lye.

He pleaded guilty to both burglaries at Dudley magistrates' court.

Mrs Maxine Jarrousse-Jones, prosecuting, said: "Two males broke into the pub via a fire exit. They went to four gambling machines and smashed them until they were destroyed and the cash was taken out. It is not known the amount of cash that was taken due to the machines being emptied regularly. The glass panel in the doors cost about £200 to repair. The gaming company said that the machines cost about £6,000.

"When interviewed about the incident he said he could not remember what he was doing on that day in question.

"The other matter was the incident at the Customark factory unit in Lye where McDonald gained entry to a rear window and forced the metal bars behind it. He said he had entered the premises to find items to sell to fund his drug addiction."

Patrick Currie, defending, said: "He had been in a stable relationship and things were going well until it collapsed and as a result of that he found it difficult to cope and became very depressed and returned to his old drug habit.

"He accepts that he committed both offences, but it was at a time when he was involved in drugs and at a low."

McDonald had previous convictions for burglary dating from 2010.

He was given a six-month community order and told to pay £500 towards compensation. He also has to pay £185 in costs and £85 victim surcharge fee.

He also pleaded guilty to using a vehicle without insurance and was given six penalty points on his licence and told to pay £100.

Traders' brochure listing will cost more

TRADESPEOPLE will have to either pay two thirds more in fees, or be taken off a list of council recommended businesses.

Dudley Council chiefs have authorised increasing charges for traders to be listed in the existing Fix-A-Home booklet, published through Dudley Trading Standards and Age UK Dudley, to help residents find reliable builders, plumbers, electricians and more.

From January 1, the annual charge for inclusion in the list has risen from £90 to £150.

The list currently has 120 vetted and selected members in 19 business categories.

The Fix-A-Home scheme has been generating an income of around £10,800 every year, all of which goes to Age UK.

However as a result of rising costs, it has also been decided to change the set-up so that the council's Trading Standards team are fully responsible for printing and posting of the booklets, and will receive most of the income.

Age UK Dudley will still be involved in promoting the booklet, but will receive a set income of £4,000.

Network

The scheme has been running in Dudley since February 2000 and was accredited by the Local Authority Assured Traders Scheme Network in November 2006.

At the moment traders pay £90 annually to be listed in one category in the Fix-A-Home booklet, and can be included in a second category if they pay an additional £20.

From the start of this month they need to pay £150 to be in one category and an extra £35 to be in two. Moreover, if they wait until April 2018 they will have to pay double of what it costs now to be included, at £180. The second listing charge will remain at £35.

The council's decision notice states: "It was considered that a doubling of the fee straight away would be unwelcome for the existing traders so by covering 15 months and stepping up the fee after the first year may encourage more traders to stay with the scheme."

The decision was authorised by Councillor Rachel Harris, who said: "Our scheme is still a lot cheaper than others. It is an important service which many residents rely on. It gives them peace of mind to know people doing work to their homes have gone through the council and trading standards."

Perry takes fridge up a mountain

Perry Ware, of Dudley, carried a fridge up Snowdon to raise money for the hospital that saved his grand-daughter

TYPICAL fundraising efforts are not this man's style – Perry Ware decided to climb Mount Snowdon whilst carrying a 50lb fridge on his back, all in aid of Birmingham Children's Hospital.

Mr Ware from Dudley, who is a breakdown engineer at DP Gears in Brierley Hill, says he was a couch potato who 'didn't do anything' until he was 50 years old. But he has spent the past five years climbing mountains – even reaching the base camp at Everest in the Himalayas.

He has now raised more than £2,500 for the hospital, which saved his grand-daughter's life.

Ava-Mae only weighed 600 grams when she was born and spent the first 12 months of her life in the hospital.

The seven-hour journey up Snowdon in September left 55-year-old Mr Ware with back and chest pains but he said he would 'do it again, tomorrow, if he could'.

"The wind kept blowing me from side to side. It wasn't too bad getting up because I could lean forward and put the weight on my back, it was more of a problem on the way down as I had a lot of extra weight on my legs."

He added: "The pain is all well worth it really and I'd do it again if I could."

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Good' report for pre-school

A PRE-SCHOOL has been praised following an inspection by Ofsted.

Wordsley Pre-School and Playgroup retained its rating of 'good' following the most recent visit from the education regulator.

Inspectors were impressed with teaching and said children and parents were happy with the pre-school in Brierley Hill Road, Wordsley.

It was rated as 'good' across the board, with the inspection taking into account quality of leadership and teaching, and the development and behaviour of the children who attend.

Speed checks find dozens break limit

POLICE speed checks caught 41 drivers breaking the speed limit in one morning.

Officers carried out the survey on Thorns Road, in Quarry Bank, which has a 30mph limit. The excessive speeds recorded on a recent Thursday ranged from 37mph to 55mph.

Councillor Nicholas Barlow said: "People should be obeying the speed limit. To be doing speeds from 35mph to 50mph is absolutely crazy.

"It's a shame we haven't got the speed cameras in operation down there permanently."

Festive tickets boost hospice

A £3 million fundraising drive to revamp the day services unit at Mary Stevens Hospice has received a boost of nearly £50,000 thanks to the sale of Christmas lottery tickets.

The hospice's annual Candy Cane Christmas Draw has raised the bumper sum which will help the charity to continue providing vital care for families across Dudley borough.

A total of 49,554 tickets were bought for £1 each, which is an increase of 4,766 on last year's draw.

Logistics company supports charity day

A LOGISTICS firm showed its backing for the Alzheimer's Society with a big donation to mark Elf Day.

Lee Allen, service manager for the society, dressed as an elf for the national fundraising Elf Day last month.

He was charged with getting as many 'elfie selfies' on the day to raise awareness of the Alzheimer's Society. His last stop was at JJX Logistics on Pensnett Trading Estate where he collected £3,000 donated by the transport firm.

Arrest over kitten theft

A KITTEN stolen in a burglary in Lower Gornal but has been found and returned to its owners. According to police, no other items were taken during the break-in at a property on Central Drive on December 23. A 31-year-old man has been arrested on suspicion of burglary and bailed.

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IN MY VIEW
with Mark Andrews

Question is whether patients are cared for

AT least two people a day are dying of thirst or starvation in hospitals, according to figures from the Office for National Statistics. Malnutrition was mentioned on the death certificates of 297 patients who died in hospital during 2015, while dehydration was cited on 429.

Now every case is different, and it would be naive to lay all of the blame on the NHS. But the sheer numbers do suggest something is amiss. Money is always an issue, but really, how much does it cost to check if somebody has been eating their food?

During my visits to hospitals I have been touched by the kindness of nursing staff towards patients who can sometimes be challenging. But I have also seen time and resources wasted on questions which have very little to do with the ailments in question, and everything to do with politically correct box ticking.

The staff are simply following instructions. But maybe their bosses, both in the NHS and government, might care to focus on the basics, and leave the lifestyle surveys to others?

❒❒❒

MEANWHILE, Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospital Trust has really got to the heart the issues facing our overstretched hospitals by spending £1,265 on 100 "gender neutral" toilets.

Now I've no idea what a "gender neutral toilet" is, but I imagine it is not too different from those, boring old-fashioned "gender specific" ones. You know, a cistern, a seat, and a chain.

The main difference, as far as I can see, is that the gender neutral ones have a rather confusing sign featuring four figures: one male, one female, one in a wheelchair, and one which can only be described as resembling somebody in a Bernie Clifton ostrich suit. Which is great when the panto cast drops in for a visit, but a waste of time for the rest of the year.

Last year Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust announced plans to get rid of 450 staff. Nice to know they have got their priorities right.

❒❒❒

LAST week marked 50 years since the death of Donald Campbell while attempting to set an unsurpassable water-speed record on Lake Coniston.

Campbell, along with his father Sir Malcolm and Captain George Eyston, was part of a golden age of British adventurers who put their lives on the line pushing the boundaries of technology and human endeavour. Eyston, driving a car called Thunderbolt built at Tipton's Bean foundry, broke the land speed record three times, ultimately reaching 357.5 mph in 1938.

Today, the Bean has been replaced by houses. Swashbuckling eccentrics like Campbell and Eyston have made way for millionaire playboys Jenson Button and Lewis Hamilton.

Need for speed – heroic record-breaker Donald Campbell

Bill Smith with Bluebird when recovered from Coniston Water

Thyssenkrupp's Dean Melling, left, with Bill Smith

Firm backing bid for Bluebird's restoration

DOUG WOOTTON on the labour of love engineering project to restore the iconic Bluebird K7 jet hydroplane

A BLACK Country firm has helped restore the iconic jet-powered Bluebird boat to mark 50 years since it was destroyed during an ill-fated attempt on the water speed record – killing national hero Donald Campbell.

Until recently the British engineering feat seemed lost forever in Coniston Water until Cradley Heath-based Thyssenkrupp got involved.

The industrial materials group, whose UK headquarters are in Cox's Lane, provided the Bluebird Project with material including sheet metal and 350kg aluminium billets, supplied from its facility in Heywood, Greater Manchester.

The project aims to restore the wreck of Bluebird K7 – the revolutionary jet-powered hydroplane that had broken seven world records until the time of the fatal accident on the Cumbrian lake on January 4, 1967.

Flowers

The 50th anniversary of the death of former British land and water speed record holder Donald Campbell was marked at the location of the tragedy last week when his daughter Gina Campbell laid flowers on Coniston Water.

She said she was "humbled" his achievements were still recognised, half a century on from his death

Campbell was attempting to break his own 276mph water speed record when disaster struck. He had looked on course to shatter the record, with a newly-remodelled Bluebird K7 averaging almost 300mph.

But, as he entered the measured kilometre, the unprecedented speed caused the Bluebird's nose to lift. The craft rose 30ft out of the water, somersaulted and crashed back into the lake, splitting in half on impact, Campbell was killed instantly.

Restoration of Bluebird nears completion Photo credit: Mike Bull/The Bluebird Project

In August 2000 a team led by Bill Smith, an engineer and part-time diver, located the wreckage of the Bluebird.

What started out, in Bill's words, as a 'winter project' to find the wreck eventually became a large-scale recovery and restoration mission.

Greg Buxton, a then-employee of Thyssenkrupp who knew Bill through their shared passion for diving, introduced his employers to the project. The first donations – sheet of aluminium – were made in 2006.

Mr Smith said: "We've used virtually everything that came out of the lake but we've had to re-shape what's available to use and replace some other parts."

"We were just starting out on the restoration when, by chance, Greg got in touch with us. He was eager to help and put us in touch with his colleagues."

Mr Smith is insistent that donations such as Thyssenkrupp's have allowed the restoration to proceed without the pressure of a fixed deadline that would come with other means of funding.

He added: "Every part of this project is achieved through donations – the material, the heat, the light, the premises. It's hard to find that kind of support.

"This project goes beyond attention to detail. The idea is that one day you'll be able to look at archive photos, look at the restored Bluebird and not see the difference. If a screw was wonky on the original and we're putting it back, we won't try to correct it – we'll put it in wonky.

"We're not working to a deadline. It's about getting it done right. The anniversary will come and go as we rebuild the Bluebird but she is a national treasure and we'll take as long as we need.

"You can't display the Bluebird in a museum as a wreck, the chemistry wouldn't support it. It'd continue to degenerate.

"We're very thankful for the support of Thyssenkrupp and all of the sponsors, donors and volunteers who continue to make this project possible."

A bespoke engine based on the original design has been fitted, and the Bluebird roared to life in November, for the first time since that fateful day in 1967.

Dean Melling, Director of Commercial Materials at Thyssenkrupp, said: "This is a fascinating project.We are delighted to be providing material to help support Bill and his team return the Bluebird to its former glory. We are delighted to be associated with a truly unique piece of British history.

"I've been liaising with Bill personally on the project over the last few years and it's been exciting to watch it progress. We look forward to seeing the Bluebird out on Coniston Water once again some day."

Surrey-born Donald Campbell was the holder of eight world speed records in the 1950s and 1960s in the Bluebird cars and boats.

Ms Campbell was among a small party to take to the lake, where prayers were said at the exact time of the crash. She clutched her father's teddy bear mascot, Mr Whoppit, which was found in the water after the accident.

"If my father could have chosen a way to die it would have been this way," said Ms Campbell, who was a teenager when her father died. "If he had died a couple of weeks ago there would have been a few paragraphs in the Daily Telegraph. But here we are in 2017 talking about a hero that I still remember as a handsome young man.

"I'm so pleased and proud it's not just old fogies like me that have been inspired by what he did. It's young people too."

As the ceremony took place on Wednesday, January 4, an RAF jet made a low level flypast. The flower-laying was followed by a service at the Campbell Memorial and at Coniston Cemetery, where Mr Campbell was buried after his remains were recovered in 2001.

Brexit – the people have spoken, so listen

RE: Brexit. A few weeks ago I read that a survey of readers had shown that were the EU referendum to be repeated the result obtained last summer might not be repeated.

Since the referendum, the media has been full of demands that the Government rush to make clear its negotiating position and that Brexit will, in one way or another, be disadvantageous to this country.

I voted 'remain' since I thought that either the vote would be overwhelmingly in favour of the 'status quo', or that the leave majority would be tiny.

Instead, there was a massive vote in favour of an exit from the EU. The nationwide majority of four per cent can leave no one in doubt that the prevailing opinion is that the people of this country consider that a better future can be had if we are able to: control our borders, decide nationally how tax revenues are to be spent, have Parliament legislate, and make our own trade deals with Commonwealth members, China, the United States, and other trading partners.

What the media has termed a 'hard' Brexit is, in fact, the only form of departure from the EU that is capable of delivering what most of the people in this country want. To question the result is to undermine the very fabric of democracy.

The people were asked; the people have answered. There is nothing further to be said about the legitimacy of the vote. Look to what may be required as this nation moves towards resurgence and redemption, and hone those skills that led to great success before the EU.

LIONEL H WESTON
Stourbridge

Scrooge would be de-lighted

CONGRATULATIONS Dudley council on the display of the Christmas light in the town. No, that is not a typing error – with the 'display' running to a whole three strings across the road, the effort was nothing short of pathetic.

The Christmas tree which normally takes pride of place in the market in the town centre was pushed out to the edge of town to stand in the rarely used square outside the museum (sorry, new flats development), and the space rented out to the operator of a children's merry-go-round.

The extensive display was eventually begrudgingly switched on on December 10, a whole two weeks before Christmas. Oh, how you spoil us.

This year it was possible to stand in the town centre and not see anything to suggest that it was Christmas.

Dudley Council, Scrooge is proud of you.

R MASON
Tividale

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST
Dudley Chronicle,
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EMAIL
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Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

Sit-and-wait best system at the GP's

HERE we go again. Appointments at GP surgeries are nearing breaking point, patients are having to wait weeks for an appointment and all the alleged experts, professionals and highly overpaid executives still cannot see the wood for the trees.

There are only a certain amount of appointments that can be made in any one day and therefore this can only end with a bottleneck of people waiting for a slot but this can be reduced dramatically if only our experts, professionals and highly overpaid executives realise not all changes are for the better. So I say return to the days when patients could see a doctor when ill, and did not overload the overstretched system. Of course, I refer to the sit-and-wait system.

The most I ever had to wait was 30 minutes and not as it is now, practically 30 days! This would reduce the queues at our A&E departments and eventually ease the life of our overworked GPs.

I fear little will change purely because those that make these changes are too afraid to admit their mistakes and will never be using the system, like us mere mortals.

PETE LOWE
Brierley Hill

Hospital's car park too costly

RE Russells Hall Hospital. I had the misfortune to be admitted to hospital over the Xmas period with respiratory problems. This wonderful hospital with its dedicated staff looked after me and reassured me. Even though it took six hours before I was admitted to the Emergency Assessment Ward, I was never left alone for more than an hour.

These lovely people (ie skeleton staff) did wonders, nothing was too much trouble. This was my choice of hospital, it is a beautiful place and spotlessly clean.

The only downfall is parking and its charges. My daughter had to pay £10 for two visits, one with items I needed and one to take me home. Their charges are outrageous and should be sorted.

But thank you to all who looked after me. I am home now with a district nurse calling, so thanks again, and God bless you all.

PAMELA BAHAKAM
Oldbury

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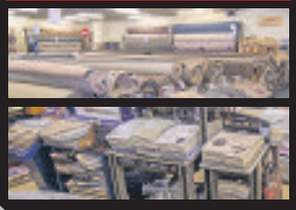

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Glassboys pride of the Black Country

The FA Cup fairytale ended but Stourbridge FC can hold their heads high says David Cosgrove

Still smiling – these fans were not disheartened

'THEY did us proud – it was a valiant effort'.

Stourbridge may have been knocked out of the FA Cup but they returned home to the Black Country with pride intact – and the reputation of players and fans massively enhanced.

Supporters set off for Wycombe for their third round match hoping to add to their recent giant-killing record.

As 12 coaches rolled out to start the 97-mile journey to Adams Park, there was a sense of anticipation, expectation and optimism. Having dispatched Northampton in the previous round, the thinking went, why couldn't Stourbridge do it again?

It was clear this was no ordinary away day, with the presence of a Danish TV crew filming the fans on one of the coaches.

Not what usually happens on a trip to Buxton in the Northern Premier League but there is something special about the world's oldest cup competition.

For fans like 77-year-old Ken Guest, this match was a lifetime in the making.

A Glassboys fan of 74 years standing, the pensioner has seen hundreds of players come through the club in his time.

But he rates the current crop as one of the best he's seen and before the match he had fancied Gary Hackett's side to grab a 1-1 draw and take Wycombe back to the Black Country for a replay.

His prediction nearly came up trumps.

The Glassboys gave it a real go and were only outdone at the last by a thumping header by Chairboys' striker, Adebayo Akinfenwa. But this wasn't a day that was just about the result.

It was about the experience, the adventure, the story to tell the grandchildren.

About the day 2,000 fans of a Northern Premier League side took over a League Two ground. The fans out sang their opposition while the players outplayed theirs for much of the tie.

A cacophony of noise came from the massed ranks of away fans for nearly an hour before kick-off.

As the match got under way the Stourbridge fans continued to drown out their hosts. All the noise was coming from the away end, with little in response from the surprisingly subdued home support.

Scenes in the Glassboys' end were nothing short of raucous leading up to the first whistle, with chants of 'Stourbridge FC . . . from the Black Country' ringing around the ground. For much of the first half a party atmosphere flowed from the Stourbridge supporters, especially as they took the game to the home side.

Flare

Unfortunately, the rowdy but otherwise impeccable behaviour was marred by a flare being thrown onto the pitch from the away end midway through the first half.

An early goal at the start of the second period quietened the sea of Stour fans for a short time. But the reaction to the Glassboys' equaliser was deafening, and continued right up to the 90th minute and beyond.

Even Akinfewa's late winner for Wycombe did little to dampen the spirits of the Stourbridge fans. The away end remained packed for 15 minutes after the final whistle as supporters paid tribute to the valiant Glassboys' players.

Mr Guest said afterwards: "They played very well and I think they deserved a draw.

"We're disappointed, but never mind."

Dudley Council leader Pete Lowe said: "It was absolutely fantastic. Stourbridge FC made the fans proud, the town proud and the Black Country proud. They have made history.

"It was a fantastic occasion from start to finish. The supporters were superb."

Glassboys' fans celebrate Stourbridge's 70th minute equaliser

Stourbridge chairman Andy Pountney in front of the travelling fans

Captain fantastic Tom Tonks consoled at the end of the game

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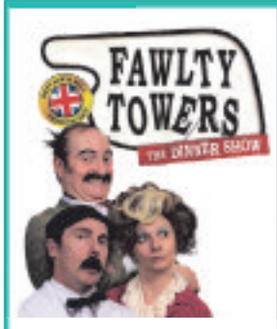

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Schools are facing crisis retaining headteachers

DUDLEY Council admits it is struggling to retain headteachers in its schools after new research revealed the full extent of the town's recruitment crisis.

In the last five years, 30 schools in Dudley got through two headteachers, 12 have had three heads, while two even needed four heads.

A council spokesman said: "We have a poor response for headship appointments and most schools have to re-advertise a second time."

Councillor Patrick Harley, the opposition Tory leader on Dudley Council, has accused the authority of accepting failure in its efforts to appoint school principals.

He has called for an internal investigation in a bid to improve headteacher retention.

"Headteachers are the captains of our schools and when they get it right, our schools improve and meet the needs of the young people in Dudley.

"I can appreciate that attracting the best people for head positions is no easy task due to the high amount of competition.

Councillor Patrick Harley has accused Dudley Council of accepting failure

Concerning

"However, it is extremely concerning that the current administration appears to be wringing their hands and saying there is nothing they can do to improve the situation.

"It is no good saying 'oh, we've had a poor response' and just trying to muddle on. It is precisely that attitude that leads to a decline in standards.

"We have some excellent headteachers in Dudley, particularly in academies, but those schools that are changing heads two or three times every few years will suffer as a result.

"The council needs to take an urgent look at its internal processes."

But Martin Lynch, a spokesman for the National Union of Teachers in Dudley, said the expectations on headteachers to hit ever higher targets was turning people away from the job.

"The main problem is that all too often, headteachers are put in a no-win situation. The requirements and pressures are ratcheted up year on year as Ofsted continues to raise the bar.

"Quite simply, it can be the end of your career if your school does not hit the mark, so perhaps we should not be surprised if people are not exactly queuing up to do the job. People are less likely to be attracted to the role of headteacher as it becomes more and more stressful," he explained.

Councillor Ian Cooper, cabinet member for children's services, said the authority was doing it it could to support governing bodies to recruit 'great leaders'.

He also cited the work of the School Improvement Alliance, which the council set up as part of a strategy to improve standards in Dudley's schools.

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Drunken youth halted car so he could punch a stranger

A DRUNK teenager beat up a stranger after forcing the motorist to a standstill by running half naked into the road, a judge heard.

Trouble flared after Shaun Cotton downed eight pints and two vodkas at a family party, Wolverhampton Crown Court was told. The 18-year-old had been upset by comments made about his late grandmother and hit out 'in frustration', it was claimed.

He dashed into Ashleigh Road, Tividale, during the evening of September 17 and attacked 66-year-old Raymond Saunders after the driver was brought to a halt.

Mr John Brotherton, prosecuting, said: "The defendant was screaming and not wearing a top when he appeared in front of the vehicle."

Cotton banged on the driver's door and punched the victim in the face when it was opened. He then tried to pull the stunned motorist out of the car but was prevented by the seat belt. Cotton punched the victim in the face a second time before running away.

The victim drove home before going to hospital where it was discovered that he had a fractured cheekbone.

The defendant maintained he had delivered a single blow but his barrister, Mr Will Rose, said: "Whether there was one or two punches, thankfully the incident was over in a matter of seconds. This young man has never been in trouble before and accepts that he had too much to drink at the party.

"During the evening he overheard comments made about his grandmother, with whom he had been very close. He took out his frustration on somebody who had nothing to do with the matter."

Cotton, of Tower Road, Tividale, pleaded guilty to causing grievous bodily harm and was given 51 weeks detention in a Young Offenders Institution, suspended for two years. He was ordered to complete 240 hours unpaid work and pay £250 compensation.

Disruption fear due to roadworks

TRAFFIC disruption is anticipated when a busy Black Country road is shut at night for essential repairs.

Sandwell Highways has revealed work is needed to repair joints on the viaduct on the Black Country New Road in Tipton as part of scheduled maintenance.

There will be overnight lane closures between 8pm and 6am this week until tomorrow (Friday).

A spokesman for the council said: "This is part of rolling roadworks that had been planned by our highways team. It is not an emergency closure."

The authority adds that after each night's work all lanes should be back open in time for the morning rush hour.

Sandwell Council is also keeping motorists updated via Twitter, Facebook and its website.

Young voices on song at Merry Hill

These pupils from Burnt Tree Primary School were in fine voice to win the choir competition at Merry Hill shopping centre

A BLACK Country primary school has won the annual festive choir competition held by the intu Merry Hill shopping centre.

Burnt Tree Primary School, in Tividale, won £1,000 following the competition at the Brierley Hill mall.

Now deputy headteacher Jayne Bayliss is planning starting a regular choir at the school after the children's success in the run-up to Christmas.

A total of 22 pupils from the school took part in the competition.

They performed two songs, a Christmas medley and Santa Clause is Coming to Town.

Final

They performed for shoppers before being called back to sing in the final.

Mrs Bayliss said: "We didn't have a choir so prepared the group in the six weeks up to the competition.

"Now, after winning, we will set up a choir for the school. We're all delighted, of course."

Each pupil in the choir received a £5 Merry Hill shopping centre voucher.

The school is yet to decide what it will spend the £1,000 prize money on.

Busiest day for region's ambulances

WEST Midlands Ambulance Service had its busiest day ever on New Year's Day, figures have revealed.

The service received no fewer than 4,629 emergency calls across all the areas it covers, a staggering 807 more than the next busiest day, which was the same day in 2011.

It rounded off an incredibly busy festive period for the Trust. For the five day period from December 29 to January 2, the service took a total of 18,583 calls compared to 15,933 for the same period in 2015-16. That equates to a 16.6 per cent rise in call numbers for the five days.

In the Black Country alone, the service saw 962 calls on January 1, with 866 received in Staffordshire.

In the Black Country, December 31 saw 707 calls, with January 2 having 740 calls.

The service saw the evening of New Year's Eve and the early hours of New Year's Day filled with alcohol-related calls. The majority of calls during the five days were for people who were unwell with breathing difficulties, chest pains and falls.

Chief executive of the Trust, Anthony Marsh, said: "I am very grateful and proud of all the staff and volunteers that worked through this period. While the majority of people were enjoying time with family and friends, my staff were working 24 hours a day to keep the public of the West Midlands safe. "

'Barmy Ball' will be in aid of charity

A BLACK-TIE event is being held in Brierley Hill to raise funds for the Midlands Air Ambulance.

The Barmy Ball take place in the Copthorne Hotel on March 25. Tickets are priced at £35 and are available by calling (01384) 887900.

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Heartache of families told by council to leave high-rise homes

THE heartbroken final tenants of 1960s-built flats in Netherton earmarked for demolition have hit out at being 'cruelly' forced out of their homes.

Dudley Council is speeding up the process of moving residents out of Arley, Compton, Manor and Wells Courts because of fears over the crumbling state of the high rise blocks and cost of repairs.

A total of 192 residents in Arley, Compton, Manor and Wells Courts are to be given clearance priority, taking effect from this month, which mean they will go to the top of the housing list.

Many have already been moved out with the majority of the flats now empty. Those who remain are defiant with some saying they will not be moved.

Steve and Jackie Jinks have lived in Compton Court for 41 years. Mrs Jinks, 64, said: "It is cruel what they are doing. This is our home. We have memories here and all our belongings here. I'm not going to lose all that for anybody, so they can try and move us out in 12 months but I'm not going anywhere."

Her 63-year-old husband is chairman of the Compton and Arley Tenant Housing Association and said: "These flats are relatively large and the properties they are offering are much smaller."

Butcher Paul Shearwood, 58, who has lived in Wells Court for the past 11 years, said he wants to remain close to his workplace less than a mile away at New Road.

"I'm not moving out of Netherton," he said. "If it's going to cost me more to go to work I'm not going to pay for the extra cost."

Councillor Elaine Taylor, who serves Netherton, Woodside and St Andrew's ward, said: "It is being speeded up because there are lots of problems with the maintenance of the buildings and repairs that need doing."

A public notice stated the tower block would be demolished by December 18, 2023, but the council is looking to rehome everyone this year.

Chiefs said they can no longer sustain the buildings because they require more than £9 million in repairs in the short term. The cost of the demolition and compensation will cost the council £3m.

Too expensive to repair – some of the Netherton flats due for demolition

Thousands back ban on fireworks

MORE than 3,300 people in the Black Country and Staffordshire have backed a petition calling on the Government to ban the sale of fireworks to the public.

The petition, which has been signed by about 150,000 people across the country, wants only organised displays to be approved to help prevent injuries and protect animals. But in a response, the Government said it had no plans to limit the sale and use of fireworks any further.

In the run-up to the new year celebrations, which saw the sky set alight, there was a rush to sign the petition. Across the region, 560 in Dudley and Wyre Forest backed the campaign with 500 signing, also 198 in Halesowen and Rowley Regis, 180 in Stourbridge and 281 in South Staffordshire.

Despite the thousands of signatures nationwide, the matter will not be debated in Parliament as it was discussed in June. Mike Old, who created the petition, wrote: "Every year people are hurt, burnt, maimed and even lose their lives through accidents involving fireworks. People are terrorised by the misuse of fireworks. Every year animals are hurt and traumatised."

Wedding scam pair admit roles in rip-off

THIS is the double-dealing businesswoman who pocketed over £100,000 while her wedding catering company brought heartbreak to brides throughout the country.

Her husband, Ryan Holt, has pleaded guilty to money laundering.

Lisa Holt was the brains behind the online firm Bake A Cake that let down scores of couples who had paid for slap up meals, wedding cakes, chocolate fountains, DJs, decorations and photo booths that never arrived on their big day.

Several had paid over £1,000 each when they discovered that the Halesowen-based firm had suddenly closed in the summer of 2015.

The mother-of-two has been warned she faces jail after admitting a wedding catering con that cost brides-to-be and companies over £100,000.

Scores of couples had their big day blighted by Lisa Holt's firm. Dudley Trading Standards Department received 150 complaints involving a total of £56,000 worth of broken promises by the company, Wolverhampton Crown Court last week heard that up to 500 more people made similar claims on social media after the business collapsed.

Fraudster Lisa Holt left court on crutches

Resources

Internet giant Wowcha, that offers deals by third parties, also fell victim to the fraudster after she lied to it about her firm's resources, falsely claiming to have 16 photo booths and ten staff.

The two sides reached an agreement for her to provide photo booths and chocolate fountains at weddings and parties which Wowcha advertised on its website and paid her a share of the booking fees.

She pocketed up to £46,000 from this arrangement but did not provide the photo booths for 556 people, leaving Wowcha to refund customers. The overall bill could have been as high as £80,000 when their anticipated profit was taken into account.

Holt, 41, of Albert Road, Halesowen – who arrived at court on crutches – pleaded guilty to defrauding Bake A Cake customers between May 1 and August 31 2015 and making false representations to Wowcha on July 15, 2015. She further admitted making a false claim to AXA insurance on August 18, 2016, that a £6,000 hog roast machine had been stolen during a purported burglary.

Her husband Ryan, of the same age and address, pleaded guilty to money laundering. He admitted converting criminal property by transferring funds between bank accounts registered to him and his wife.

Mr Mark Jackson, prosecuting for Dudley Council, told the court: "We accept this was a business which started out legitimately, and became fraudulent.

"We do not accept the claim from Mrs Holt that one of the reasons it failed was because of a hate campaign against her by competitors."

She said in her basis of plea 'robbing Peter to pay Paul while the business was not financially viable'.

The couple were remanded on bail for pre-sentence reports until February 3 when full details of the case are expected to be outlined to the court.

Judge Barry Berlin told them: "These are very serious offences and an immediate custodial sentence is the likely outcome."

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Parkrun launches at Dell Stadium

Run director Nick Price and Dudley Mayor Councillor Mohammed Hanif with runners at the Dell Stadium

HUNDREDS of runners braved the cold to take part in the first Parkrun in Dudley.

The weekly running event, which is held at parks across the county, has now arrived in Dudley's with the first Parkrun being held in the borough at the Dell Stadium, Pensnett.

More than 300 people took part in the run, which is a 5km route. Started by run director Nick Price and Mayor of Dudley Councillor Mohammed Hanif, it began with two laps of the Dell Stadium's running track, took runners along the canal before returning onto the track.

For details visit www.parkrun.org.uk/dudley website.

Illegal worker held to account

ILLEGAL immigrant Parvinder Singh slipped into this country unnoticed and found a job but was caught out after he was robbed, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

The 30-year-old single man decided it would be safer to have his wage paid into a bank so went to open an account at the HSBC branch in Dudley using a fake Portuguese passport.

Staff at the bank found his behaviour suspicious and were confident both he and a male friend who accompanied him were not speaking to each other in Portuguese, explained Mr David Iles, prosecuting.

Home Office experts checked his passport and found that the document was false. Singh was arrested when he went back to the branch for an arranged meeting.

A search of his home revealed a another forged passport in his name, although this one was Italian.

Mr Simon Hanns, defending, said: "He had been robbed of money and could not make an official complaint because he is an illegal immigrant who should not have been working in this country. He sought to open a bank account to protect the money he was illegally earning.

"This was an unsophisticated attempt. He is a respectful man of previous good character who is the first member of his family to fall foul of the law in any country."

Singh, of Owen Street, Brierley Hill pleaded guilty to possession of a false identity document and was jailed for 15 months.

Recorder Greg Pryce said that the fact the defendant had a second false passport at his home aggravated the offence.

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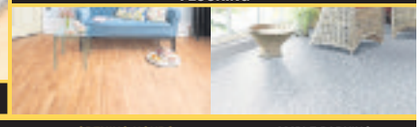

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WESTON-SUPER-MARE - SANDRINGHAM HOTEL [illegible] th - Friday 17th February 2017 5 DAYS SOLD OUT £169
Excursions, Half-Board - En-suite rooms with tea/c[illegible] Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

40's THEME MYSTERY - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Monday 13th - Friday 17th February 2017 3 DAYS £109
Excursions, Evening meal - Breakfast, Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

TORQUAY - MARQUIS HOTEL - Winter Warmer NEW Monday 27th Feb - Friday 3rd March 2017 5 DAYS £159
Excursions, Half-board, En-suite room with TV, tea/coffee, Entertainment 2 nights, Free hot drinks on coach

LLANDUDNO - ST KILDA HOTEL * Showtime** [illegible] Friday 10th March 2017 5 DAYS SOLD OUT £235
Excursions - Half-board (home cooking), En-suite [illegible] Entertainment and dancing, Lift to all floors, Free hot drinks on coach, Single room supplement £30

MOTOWN WEEKEND - TORQUAY NETHWAY HOTEL Friday 10th March 2017 3 DAYS £109
Excursions - Entertainment, Sunday roast

EASTBOURNE - HADDON HALL Monday 13th - Friday 17th March 2017 5 DAYS £235
Excursions - Half-board (choice menu), En-suite room with tea/coffee, Entertainment and dancing, Free hot drinks on coach

SPRING WEEKEND MYSTERY?? - WHERE WILL [illegible] - Monday 20th March 2017 4 DAYS SOLD OUT £135
Excursions - Evening meal - Breakfast, Free drink[illegible] night, Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

EXMOUTH - CAVENDISH HOTEL Monday 20th - Friday 24th March 2017 5 DAYS £219
Excursions - Half-board, Lunch/Dinner inc 1 day of week, En-suite room with tea/coffee, Entertainment - Lift, Free hot drinks on coach

ILFRACOMBE - IMPERIAL HOTEL*** Monday 27th - Friday 31st March 2017 5 DAYS £209
Excursions, Half-board - En-suite room with tv, tea/coffee, Dinner/Lunch inc on 1 day during stay, Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

MYSTERY 4 DAY TOUR - WHERE WILL WE BE? [illegible] Monday 3rd April 2017 4 DAYS SOLD OUT £135
Excursions - En-suite rooms with tv, tea/coffee, [illegible] with evening meal each night - Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

ISLE OF WIGHT - BANSMORE HOTEL NEW Monday 3rd - Friday 7th April 2017 5 DAYS £239
Excursions -Ferry crossing, Half board, Lunch/dinner included 1 day during your stay, En-suite room with tv, tea/coffee, Entertainment - Lift - Free hot drinks on coach

TENBY - CLARENCE HOUSE HOTEL Monday 10th - Friday 14th April 2017 5 DAYS £269
Excursions, Half board (choice of dinner menu), En-suite room (many with sea-view), Entertainment, Happy Hour 6.30pm - 8.30pm, Free hot drinks on coach

TORQUAY - NETHWAY HOTEL EASTER Friday 14th - Monday 17th April 2017 4 DAYS £189
Excursions - Half-board, En-suite rooms with tea/coffee, Entertainment, Happy Hour each night, Free hot drinks on coach

WARNERS CORTON COASTAL VILLAGE NEW Easter Week Monday 17th - Friday 21st April 2017 5 DAYS £269
Excursions - Half board - En-suite chalets, Entertainment (Around the world theme Cabaret), Activities throughout the week, Room upgrade £20 p - Free hot drinks on coach

WEYMOUTH - FAIRHAVEN HOTEL Easter Week Monday 17th - Friday 21st April 2017 5 DAYS £269
Excursions - Half-board, En-suite room with tea/coffee, Entertainment - Lift, Free hot drinks on coach

PAIGNTON - HOTEL BONAIR ESPLANADE Monday 24th - Friday 28th April 2017 5 DAYS £235
Excursions - Half board, Home cooking - En-suite room with tv, tea/coffee, Entertainment, Lift, Free hot drinks on coach, Balcony room supp. £2 p per night

MYSTERY WEEKEND - WHERE WILL WE BE? [illegible] 30th April 2017 2 DAYS SOLD OUT £79
Excursions, Evening meal - Breakfast, Entertainment

TORQUAY - NETHWAY HOTEL Monday 1st - Friday 5th May 2017 5 DAYS £235
Excursions- Half-board, En-suite rooms with tea/coffee, Entertainment, Happy Hour each night, Free hot drinks on coach

GREAT YARMOUTH - NEW BEACH HOTEL NEW Wednesday 3rd - Sunday 7th May 2017 5 DAYS £235
Excursions, Half-board, En-suite room with TV, tea/coffee, Two Lifts, Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

ST IVES - COTTAGE HOTEL NEW Sunday 7th - Friday 12th May 2017 6 DAYS £329
Excursions - Half-Board, En suite rooms with tea/coffee - Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

HAYLING ISLAND - Mill Rythe Holiday Village NEW Monday 8th - Friday 12th May 2017 5 DAYS £225
Excursions, Half-board - En-suite chalets with tv, tea/coffee, Entertainment - Ballroom, Free hot drinks on coach

LYTHAM ST ANNES - LINDUM HOTEL Monday 15th - Friday 19th May 2017 5 DAYS £265
Excursions - Half-board, En-suite room with tv, tea/coffee, Lift - Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

BABBACOMBE - HOTEL DE LA MER Friday 19th - Sunday 21st May 2017 3 DAYS £119
Excursions, Half-board - Sunday roast before departure, En-suite room with TV, tea/coffee, Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

MORECAMBE & THE LAKES - AUCKLAND HOTEL Monday 22nd - Friday 26th May 2017 5 DAYS £269
Excursions - Half-board (home cooking), En-suite room with TV, tea/coffee, Entertainment and dancing - Lift, Free hot drinks on coach

MYSTERY WEEKEND - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Saturday 27th - Sunday 28th May 2017 2 DAYS £79
Excursions, Evening meal - Breakfast, Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

BOURNEMOUTH - ULLSWATER HOTEL Monday 29th May - Friday 2nd June 2017 5 DAYS £269
Excursions, Half-board - En-suite rooms, Lift - Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

ISLE OF WIGHT - THE TROUVILLE HOTEL, SANDOWN Tuesday 30th May - Sunday 4th June 2017 6 DAYS £359
Excursions - Ferry crossings, Half-board (sea-view restaurant), En-suite room with TV, tea/coffee, Many rooms with sea-view, Ballroom and Entertainment, Lift, trim-gym & indoor bowling, Free hot drinks on coach

PAIGNTON - HOTEL BONAIR ESPLANADE Saturday 3rd - Saturday 10th June 2017 8 DAYS £365
Excursions - Half board, Home cooking - En-suite room with TV, tea/coffee, Entertainment - Lift, Free hot drinks on coach, Balcony room supp. £2 per person per night

EASTBOURNE - THE HADLEIGH HOTEL Monday 5th - Friday 9th June 2017 5 DAYS £279
Excursions, Half board - En-suite room with tv, tea/coffee, Entertainment - Lift, Free hot drinks on coach

WESTON-SUPER-MARE - SANDRINGHAM HOTEL Monday 12th - Friday 16th June 2017 5 DAYS £245
Excursions, Half-board - En-suite rooms with tea/coffee, Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

BABBACOMBE - HOTEL DE LA MER Tuesday 13th - Saturday 17th June 2017 5 DAYS £269
Excursions - Half-board, En-suite room with TV, tea/coffee, Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

MYSTERY WEEKEND - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Saturday 17th - Sunday 18th June 2017 2 DAYS £79
Excursions, Evening meal - Breakfast, Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

SCARBOROUGH - RED LEA HOTEL Monday 19th - Friday 23rd June 2017 5 DAYS £299
Excursions - Half-board, En-suite room with tea/coffee, Entertainment - Lift, Free hot drinks on coach

SIDMOUTH - THE BEDFORD HOTEL NEW Friday 23rd - Tuesday 27th June 2017 5 DAYS £349
Excursions, Half-board, En-suite room with tea/coffee, Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

LONDON - 5 STAR WALDORF HOTEL***** Sunday 25th - Monday 26th June 2017 TREAT YOURSELF!
Drop-off at Harrods for shopping, En-suite rooms - Breakfast, Free time in London, Free hot drinks on coach

SCOTLAND - DUNOON - THE ESPLANADE HOTEL Sunday 25th - Friday 30th June 2017 6 DAYS £359
Excursions - Half-board, En-suite room with tea/coffee - Entertainment, Lift - Dining room with stunning views, Finest local Scottish fayre, Free hot drinks on coach

EASTBOURNE - HADDON HALL Saturday 1st - Saturday 8th July 2017 8 DAYS £439
Excursions - Half-board (choice menu), En-suite room with tea/coffee, Entertainment and dancing, Free hot drinks on coach

TORQUAY - NETHWAY HOTEL MOTOWN WEEKEND Friday 7th - Sunday 9th July 2017 3 DAYS £115
Excursions - Half-board - Sunday Roast, En-suite rooms with tea/coffee, Entertainment, Happy Hour each night, Free hot drinks on coach

ISLE OF WIGHT - THE SHANKLIN HOTEL NEW Wednesday 12th - Sunday 16th July 2017 5 DAYS £299
Excursions, Half-board, En-suite room with TV, tea/coffee, Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

LLANDUDNO - QUEENS HOTEL Monday 17th - Friday 21st July 2017 5 DAYS £299
Excursions, Half board - En-suite rooms with tv, tea/coffee, Entertainment - Dancing - Lift, 2nd Lounge area, Free hot drinks on coach

TORQUAY - NETHWAY HOTEL Saturday 29th - Saturday 5th July 2017 8 DAYS SOLD OUT £375
Excursions - Half-board, En-suite room[illegible] Happy Hour each night, Free hot drinks on coach

MYSTERY WEEKEND - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Saturday 29th - Sunday 30th July 2017 2 DAYS £79
Excursions, Evening meal - Breakfast, Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

ILFRACOMBE - IMPERIAL HOTEL*** Sunday 30th July - Friday 4th August 2017 6 DAYS £329
Excursions, Half-board - En-suite room with tv, tea/coffee, Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

WEYMOUTH - FAIRHAVEN HOTEL Sunday 6th - Saturday 12th August 2017 7 DAYS £399
Excursions - Half-board, En-suite room with tea/coffee, Entertainment - Lift, Free hot drinks on coach

MORECAMBE - Carlisle/Settle Railway & Scottish Borders AUCKLAND HOTEL - Monday 14th - Friday 18th August 2017 5 DAYS £279
Excursions, Scottish Borders & Carlisle/Settle Train Ride, Half-board (home cooking), En-suite room with TV, tea/coffee, Entertainment and dancing - Lift, Free hot drinks on coach

TENBY - CLARENCE HOUSE HOTEL Sunday 20th - Friday 25th August 2017 6 DAYS £339
Excursions - Half board (choice of dinner menu), En-suite room (many with sea-view), Entertainment - Happy Hour 6.30pm - 8.30pm, Free hot drinks on coach

MYSTERY WEEKEND - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Saturday 26th - Sunday 27th August 2017 2 DAYS £79
Excursions, Evening meal - Breakfast, Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

ISLE OF WIGHT - THE TROUVILLE HOTEL, SANDOWN Tuesday 29th Aug - Saturday 2nd September 2017 5 DAYS £319
Excursions - Ferry crossing, Half-board (sea-view restaurant), En-suite room with tv, tea/coffee, Many rooms with sea-view, Ballroom and Entertainment, Lift, trim-gym & indoor bowling, Free hot drinks on coach

TORQUAY - NETHWAY HOTEL Friday 1st - Sunday 3rd September 2017 3 DAYS £115
Excursions - Half-board - Sunday Roast, En-suite rooms with tea/coffee, Entertainment, Happy Hour each night, Free hot drinks on coach

EASTBOURNE - LANGHAM HOTEL NEW Monday 4th - Friday 8th September 2017 5 DAYS £299
Excursions, Half-board, En-suite rooms with tea/coffee, Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

LYTHAM ST ANNES - LINDUM HOTEL Monday 4th - Friday 8th September 2017 5 DAYS £279
Excursions - Half-board, En-suite room with tv, tea/coffee, Lift - Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

WEYMOUTH - FAIRHAVEN HOTEL Monday 11th - Friday 15th September 2017 5 DAYS £299
Excursions - Half-board, En-suite room with tea/coffee, Entertainment - Lift, Free hot drinks on coach

SKEGNESS - SAVOY HOTEL Monday 11th - Friday 15th September 2017 5 DAYS £299
Excursions, Half-board - home cooked food, En-suite room with tv, tea/coffee, Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

BABBACOMBE - HOTEL DE LA MER Sunday 17th - Thursday 21st September 2017 5 DAYS £279
Excursions - Half-board, En-suite room with TV, tea/coffee, Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

LLANDUDNO - THE MARLBOROUGH HOTEL Monday 18th - Friday 22nd September 2017 5 DAYS £299
Excursions - Half-board, En suite rooms with tea/coffee, Family owned - Entertainment - Lift, Free hot drinks on coach

MYSTERY WEEKEND - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Saturday 23rd - Sunday 24th September 2017 2 DAYS £79
Excursions, Evening meal - Breakfast, Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

WESTON-SUPER-MARE - SANDRINGHAM HOTEL Monday 25th - Friday 29th September 2017 5 DAYS £239
Excursions, Half-board - En-suite rooms with tea/coffee, Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

TORQUAY - NETHWAY HOTEL Monday 25th - Friday 29th September 2017 5 DAYS £245
Excursions - Half-board, En-suite rooms with tea/coffee, Entertainment, Happy Hour each night, Free hot drinks on coach

BOGNOR REGIS - ROYAL NORFOLK HOTEL Saturday 30th Sept - Wednesday 4th October 2017 5 DAYS £225
Excursions, Half board - including lunch one day, En-suite rooms with TV, tea/coffee, Entertainment - Lift, Free hot drinks on coach

TORQUAY - NETHWAY HOTEL MOTOWN WEEKEND Friday 6th - Sunday 8th October 2017 3 DAYS £115
Excursions, Half-board - Sunday Roast, En-suite rooms with tea/coffee, Entertainment - Happy Hour each night, Free hot drinks on coach

NEWQUAY - ELIOT HOTEL Sunday 8th - Friday 13th October 2017 6 DAYS £269
Excursions, Half board - En-suite rooms with tea/coffee, Entertainment - Lift, Games Room, Free hot drinks on coach

MYSTERY WEEKEND - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Saturday 14th - Sunday 15th October 2017 2 DAYS £79
Excursions, Evening meal - Breakfast, Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

BLACKPOOL ILLUMINATIONS - CARN-BRAE HOTEL Monday 16th - Friday 20th October 2017 5 DAYS £229
Excursions (and tour of the lights), Half-board with choice of menu (home cooking), En-suite room with tv, tea/coffee, Entertainment. Lift, Free hot drinks on coach

BLACKPOOL ILLUMINATIONS - CARN-BRAE HOTEL Saturday 21st - Monday 23rd October 2017 3 DAYS £149
Drop-off at Harrods for shopping, En-suite rooms - Breakfast, Free time in London, Free hot drinks on coach

LONDON - 5 STAR WALDORF HOTEL*** TREAT YOURSELF!** Sunday 22nd - Monday 23rd October 2017 2 DAYS £115
Drop-off at Harrods for shopping, En-suite rooms - Breakfast, Free time in London, Free hot drinks on coach

WARNERS - BODELWYDDAN CASTLE NEW Monday 23rd - Friday 27th October 2017 5 DAYS £335
Excursions, Half-board - En-suite room in chalets, Variety Live, Great Comedy, Vocalists, Live Music, & more - Entertainment - Activities during week, Room upgrade £20 p - Free hot drinks on coach

PAIGNTON - HOTEL BONAIR ESPLANADE Turkey & Tinsel Monday 23rd - Friday 27th October 2017 5 DAYS £239
Excursions - Half board, Home cooking - En-suite room with TV, tea/coffee, Entertainment - Lift - Turkey & Tinsel Festivities, Free hot drinks on coach, Balcony room supp.£2 p.p per night

TORQUAY - NETHWAY HOTEL - Turkey & Tinsel Friday 3rd - Sunday 5th November 2017 3 DAYS £119
Excursions - Half-board - Sunday Roast, En-suite rooms with tea/coffee, Entertainment - Turkey & Tinsel Festivities, Happy Hour each night, Free hot drinks on coach

BOURNEMOUTH - ULLSWATER HOTEL Turkey & Tinsel Monday 6th - Friday 10th November 2017 5 DAYS £275
Excursions, Half-board - En-suite rooms, Lift - Entertainment - Turkey & Tinsel Festivities, Free hot drinks on coach

LYTHAM ST ANNES - ASHTON PARK HOTEL NEW Turkey & Tinsel Monday 6th - Friday 10th November 2017 5 DAYS £259
Excursions - Half-board, En-suite room with TV, tea/coffee, Swimming Pool - Steam Room - Spa Bath, Lift - Entertainment - Turkey & Tinsel Festivities, Free hot drinks on coach

MYSTERY WEEKEND - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Turkey & Tinsel Saturday 11th - Sunday 12th November 2017 2 DAYS £79
Excursions, Evening meal - Breakfast, Entertainment, Turkey & Tinsel Festivities, Free hot drinks on coach

SIDMOUTH - ROYAL YORK & FAULKNER HOTEL Turkey & Tinsel Sunday 12th - Thursday 16th November 2017 5 DAYS £299
Excursions - Half-Board - 4 courses table'd'hote, Family owned - Entertainment - Spa facilities, Turkey & Tinsel Festivities - Sherry Reception, Mulled Wine & Mince Pies - Carols - Lift, Free hot drinks on coach

EXMOUTH - CAVENDISH HOTEL Turkey & Tinsel Monday 13th - Friday 17th November 2017 5 DAYS £259
Excursions - Half-board/Full-board, En-suite room with tea/coffee, Entertainment - Turkey & Tinsel Festivities - Lift, Free hot drinks on coach

EASTBOURNE - HADDON HALL HOTEL Turkey & Tinsel Monday 20th - Friday 24th November 2017 5 DAYS £290
Excursions - Half-board (choice menu), En-suite room with tea/coffee, Entertainment and dancing, Turkey & Tinsel Festivities, Free hot drinks on coach

TENBY - CLARENCE HOUSE HOTEL Turkey & Tinsel Monday 20th - Friday 24th November 2017 5 DAYS £279
Excursions, Half board (choice of dinner menu), En-suite room (many with sea-view), Entertainment - Happy Hour 6.30pm - 8.30pm, Turkey & Tinsel Festivities, Free hot drinks on coach

MYSTERY TURKEY & TINSEL - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL Turkey & Tinsel Friday 24th - Monday 27th November 2017 4 DAYS £139
Excursions, Evening meal - Breakfast, Entertainment, Turkey & Tinsel Festivities, Free hot drinks on coach

LLANDUDNO - ST KILDA HOTEL * Turkey & Tinsel** Monday 27th Nov - Friday 1st December 2017 5 DAYS £275
Excursions, Arrival drinks, scones and cakes, Half board, En-suite room with TV, tea/coffee, Entertainment - Turkey & Tinsel Festivities, Free hot drinks on coach

TORQUAY - NETHWAY HOTEL Turkey & Tinsel Monday 27th Nov - Friday 1st December 2017 5 DAYS £239
Excursions - Half-board, En-suite rooms with tea/coffee, Entertainment - Turkey & Tinsel Festivities, Happy Hour each night, Free hot drinks on coach

THURSFORD SPECTACULAR - NEW BEACH HOTEL Friday 8th December 2017 4 DAYS £249
Excursions - Entertainment, Addmission to Thursford

CROMER - HOTEL DE PARIS THURSFORD SPECTA[illegible] 11th December 2017 4 DAYS SOLD OUT £249
Excursions, Half board - En-suite room with tea/coffee, [illegible] Spectacular Show included in this tour, Free hot drinks on coach

LONDON - 5 STAR WALDORF HOTEL*** CHRISTMAS SHOPPING** Sunday 17th - Monday 18th December 2017 2 DAYS £115
Drop-off at Harrods for Christmas shopping, En-suite rooms - Breakfast, Free time in London, Free hot drinks on coach

BABBACOMBE - HOTEL DE LA MER CHRISTMAS Saturday 23rd - Wednesday 27th December 2017 5 DAYS £425
Excursions, Full board, En-suite room with TV, tea/coffee, Entertainment - Christmas Festivities, Free hot drinks on coach

ILFRACOMBE - IMPERIAL HOTEL CHRISTMAS Saturday 23rd - Wednesday 27th Dec 2017 5 DAYS £425
Excursions, Full-board - Christmas Festivities, En-suite room with TV, tea/coffee - Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

TORQUAY - NETHWAY HOTEL TWIXMAS Wednesday [illegible] 4 DAYS SOLD OUT £169
Excursions - Half-board, En-suite rooms with tea/coffee, [illegible] each night, Free hot drinks on coach

BABBACOMBE - HOTEL DE LA MER TWIXMAS Wednesday 27th - Saturday 30th Dec 2017 4 DAYS £169
Excursion - Half-board, En-suite room with TV, tea/coffee, Entertainment, Free hot drinks on coach

LLANDUDNO - ST KILDA HOTEL Saturday 30th Dec 2017 - Tuesday 2nd Jan 2018 4 DAYS £379
Price includes: Excursion to Chester arrival drinks, sandwiches, scones, & cakes FULL BOARD! (6 course meals) En-suite room with TV, tea/coffee Entertainment and festivities free hot drinks on coach

TORQUAY - NETHWAY HOTEL Saturday 30th Dec 2017 - Tuesday 2nd Jan 2018 4 DAYS £339
Price includes: Excursions full-board - En-suite rooms with tea/coffee Entertainment - Happy Hour each night New year Celebrations Bubbly Buffet Free hot drinks on coach

BABBACOMBE - HOTEL DE LA MER Saturday 30th Dec 2017 - Tuesday 2nd Jan 2018 4 DAYS £299
Price includes: Excursions Half-board En-suite room with TV, tea/coffee Entertainment - New year Festivities Free hot drinks on coach

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First-time home buyers 'short-changed' says MP

THE West Midlands has been 'short-changed' by the Government over funding to help first-time buyers get a foot on the housing ladder, says Dudley North MP Ian Austin.

The Government is injecting £60 million a year in areas where residents looking to buy their first home are crowded out of the market by second home owners.

But the West Midlands will see just £1.9m of the money when it is released, with the South West alone receiving more than 10 times that amount having been allocated £20m.

Other areas of the country that will see more cash than the West Midlands include the South East, which will get £11m, the East of England will have almost £9m, Yorkshire and Humberside will receive £6m, and the North West has been allocated almost £6m.

Labour MP Mr Austin said he would be asking questions to find out why the West Midlands will receive just £1.9m.

"Here we go again. It looks like the West Midlands is being short-changed by the Government once more," he said.

Cutbacks

"Council cutbacks are hitting us harder than wealthier areas in the south and we got precious little of the extra funds made available to help councils or prevent pharmacies from shutting recently.

"Every week I talk to people in Dudley desperate to get a home of their own, so I'll be tabling questions to find out which councils applied and why they missed out. But it very much looks as though the Government is once again favouring their friends in the south."

Housing Minister Gavin Barwell said the cash would be channelled to to groups providing affordable housing. They had particularly helped the South West because much of the housing stock in that region was swallowed up by second home owners.

Robin rocking to its 25th

The Robin 2 today, formerly Bilston Drill Hall, in Mount Pleasant, Bilston, and now one of the top music venues in the region

ONE of the Black Country's top live music venues celebrates its quarter century in April.

The original Robin R'n'B Club opened on April 9, 1992, at its original home at the old Robin Hood Inn at Merry Hill, Brierley Hill. The club is now the Robin 2 in Mount Pleasant, Bilston, and continues to be run by founder Mike Hamblett.

The former Sub Zero drummer created the club, specialising in blues, soul and rock in the former Citizen's Theatre at the pub. He opened the 700-capacity club in the former drill hall in Bilston in 1998 and the two sites ran together until the original club closed in 2003 as Merry Hill shopping centre expanded its car parks.

The 25th anniversary of the first Robin show will see The Muffin Men, a group made up of former Frank Zappa musicians, performing on April 9.

The Robin 2 now includes its own hotel as well as Noddy's Bar, named after original Slade singer and guitarist Noddy Holder, who helped launch the venue. The club's opening night in 1992 saw 200 turned away because it was a sellout.

Councillor John Reynolds, left, and Jonn Penney, look at the line-up for the first Wolverhampton Literary Festival

Ready to book in for city's first literary festival

MUSIC and memories of life in Wolverhampton and the Black Country will feature in the city's first literary festival.

The team behind the inaugural event has now finalised its line-up featuring dozens of authors, poets and actors across 13 venues between January 27 and 29.

The main attraction for many will be award-winning author Sathnam Sanghera. The former Wolverhampton Grammar School student's first book, The Boy With The Topknot: A Memoir of Love, Secrets and Lies in Wolverhampton, is being adapted for TV to air on the BBC this autumn. The Boy With The Topknot was shortlisted for the 2008 Costa Biography Award and named 2009 Mind Book of the Year. The 40-year-old has also won numerous prizes for his journalism.

Others will no doubt be drawn by two rock frontmen. Ned's Atomic Dustbin singer Jonn Penney, from Stourbridge, will discuss the early years of the so-called 'grebo' scene with best-selling author Martin Roach at The Slade Rooms.

The Wonder Stuff frontman Miles Hunt will talk about his band's most successful years, between 1990 and '94.

Black Country character Doreen Tipton, as played by actress Gill Jordan, will speak at the University of Wolverhampton, and Express & Star columnist Peter Rhodes will discuss his military history book, For A Shilling A Day, at the city's art gallery.

The festival is a mix of free and ticketed events. For the latest programme and booking details go to www.wolvesliteraturefestival.co.uk website.

Bollards block drive in parking wrangle

Blocked – bollards and a car obstructs Nigel Serrell's new drive in a dispute over access outside his home in Rowley Regis

A PARKING wrangle in a Black Country street is driving one man up the wall after he came home from work to find bollards blocking his new £5,000 drive.

Nigel Serrell splashed out on transforming his back garden into a driveway, to try and avoid parking rows with neighbours, only for a housing association to put up bollards blocking his new block-paved driveway.

The salesman couldn't believe it when he returned to his home of 18 years on Halesowen Street in Rowley Regis, to find the barrier posts, complete with a sign declaring 'private property', had been installed on the land that provides access to his drive.

Mr Serrell, aged 58, while himself is not a Midland Heart tenant, says he kept in contact with the housing association throughout his work as he was aware that they owned the surrounding properties. He says they advised him that there would not be an issue.

However, a neighbour subsequently claimed she owns the land at the rear of his house leading to his new drive.

Mr Serrell made the shock discovery of the bollards when he returned from his job in marketing and sales at a painter and decorator business.

Adding to his problems, a dilapidated and untaxed car has been dumped in front of the bollards.

Director of Housing Management at Midland Heart, Nigel Collumbell said: "We have been working locally with residents for some time to understand and resolve the complex issues around parking and access via land owned by Midland Heart, which is designated for use by Midland Heart customers.

"These discussions are still on-going in order to find a fair solution for everyone involved."

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Curtain-up on plans for Hippodrome after rescue

EXCITING plans for the Dudley Hippodrome, which has been saved by campaigners, have been revealed.

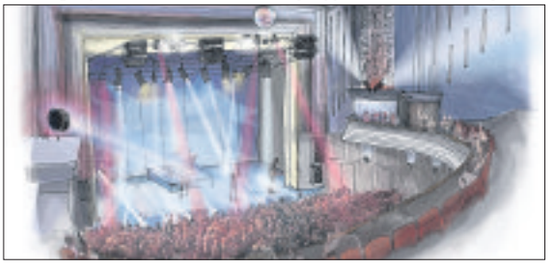
Proposals for the building on Castle Hill have now been outlined after the keys for the theatre were passed over from Dudley Council to campaigners The Black Country Hippodrome group.

Members are now working with architects on finalising the proposals which include a three-storey extension.

The group must raise around £5 million to ensure all plans can go ahead and work can begin to re-open the building.

The plans were shown during the key handover just before Christmas, marking exactly 78 years since the day the theatre was first opened.

A first glimpse of how The Black Country Hippodrome could look by 2020



An artist's impression of inside the Hippodrome after the £5m overhaul

Modernised

The new proposals show a modernised building with a large three-storey extension to the right on the building, next to Trindle Road. A small building at the site would be demolished to make way for the extension.

Large windows on the front of the building will be installed, new signs erected and more space will be created to the front of the building giving it an 'open feel'.

The plans state that the campaigners hope to change the public perception of the building from 'an eyesore to an asset'.

Proposals show potential extra space for local arts groups, spacious seating and a renovated theatre bar which will also host small music events.

A first floor bar and restaurant is also mentioned in the plans as 'providing meals and lunches'.

A stalls refurbishment would include comfortable seats and new stairs and lifts will also be created for better wheelchair access.

It is hoped that the building, which a year ago faced demolition to make way for a public open space, will re-open and start hosting events again by 2020, under its new name The Black Country Hippodrome.

The campaign group has been handed a five-year lease and has now launched its drive to refurbish the largely derelict building.

The theatre opened in 1938 and played host to such stars as Tommy Cooper, Max Miller and Laurel & Hardy in its heyday, but closed as a theatre in 1964. It was a bingo hall for many years until it closed its doors in 2009. It has remained empty ever since.

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Sat 18th - Sun 19th Mar - Faulty Towers Comedy Show - London Weekend, 3 course meal included during your show. Based at the Quality Inn, Wembley. Optional evening's entertainment at the Irish Bar! We also take in historic Windsor on our journey to London. Fun weekend at only £149.50pp*

Fri 7th - Mon 10th Apr - The English Riviera - Babbacombe 4 days, 3 nights half Board at The De La Mer Hotel. Day excursions to Teignmouth, Brixham and Torquay are also included. We visit historic Exeter on our return journey. Only £176.00*

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Fri 8th - Sun 10th Sept - Blackpool Illuminations and Fireworks Display 3 days - 2 nights half board at the ever popular Carn brae with entertainment - Free time in Blackpool - leisure time at the award winning Trentham Gardens on our return journey. Only £145.00pp* (Limited single rooms without supplement)

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Fri 17th - Mon 20th Nov - Turkey & Tinsel at the Monterey Beach Hotel Christmas has come early as we enjoy the festivities at the Monterey Beach Hotel close to Lytham St Annes. Mince Pies, Crackers and a visit from Santa on this fun filled weekend. Complimentary drink - 4 day-3 nights' accommodation - Evening entertainment - We visit the award winning Trentham Gardens on our return journey to pick up your Mistletoe! Only £189.00* (Limited single rooms without supplement)

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Inquest hears that man died after fall

A FORMER foundry worker died after a fall at a nursing home, an inquest heard.

John Leek, aged 66, was taken to Russells Hall Hospital on Christmas Eve after he fell over getting up from the breakfast table at Netherton Green Nursing Home, in Dudley.

He was then transferred onto end-of-life care and died on December 29.

He moved to Netherton Green Nursing Home after suffering a fall down his stairs at home.

The cause of death given was prostate cancer, lung cancer, dementia and a fractured hip.

Senior Coroner Zafar Siddique said: "Sadly the trauma of the fall and fractured hip accelerated his death."

A conclusion of accidental death was given.

Criminal drove stolen car at high speed through red lights

A CROOK, who drove a stolen £30,000 car on its wheel rims after its tyres were shredded during a chase through the Black Country, has been jailed for four years.

Andrew Twist, 35, reached 90mph in a 40mph zone, went through red lights and travelled the wrong way around traffic islands in the black Mercedes ML250 after it had been stolen in Stourbridge, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard. He struck glancing blows to two cars while other motorists and a cyclist were forced to swerve to avoid a collision. He also drove deliberately into a police car during the incident on August 24.

Prosecutor Mr David Iles said: "He displayed a deplorable standard of driving. The pursuit continued for 6.6 miles and lasted up to 15 minutes."

Six police cars were involved in the pursuit along the A41 towards West Bromwich and then towards Tividale. Stingers – a spiked trap set by police – were deployed, bursting the Mercedes' tyres. Police eventually boxed in the Mercedes in Dudley Road West but Twist locked himself inside, forcing an officer to smash the driver's window with a baton.

Mr Iles added: "The defendant was still making efforts to escape and struggled with the police. He was full of fight and had to be handcuffed."

Mr Stephen Hamblett, defending, said Twist, of Leys Crescent, Brierley Hill, had been on his way to sell the car for drug money and had panicked when spotted by police.

Twist, who had a string of previous convictions, admitted dangerous driving, having no insurance or licence and handling stolen property.

No convictions on forced marriage

FORCED marriages are reported to West Midlands Police at a rate of one a week but there has never been a successful conviction in the region, says a police boss.

Deputy Chief Constable Louisa Rolfe said that calls were often from concerned relatives but the crime was a 'complex' one to prosecute. She said that victims, normally Asian women aged 18 to 24, were often 'reluctant' to see family members criminalised.

"We receive on average one report a week relating to forced marriage," DCC Rolfe told the West Midlands Strategic Policing and Crime Board. "They contact us to say they are worried for a friend or themselves. We have not had a conviction. Only South Wales Police nationally has secured a conviction."

O'Hara signs up for team Big Brother

Ex-Wolves player Jamie O'Hara enters the Big Brother house

FORMER Wolves midfielder Jamie O'Hara declared he was available to join a new club from January 1 – but on January 3 he entered the Celebrity Big Brother house.

And so begins the wild and whacky world of one of the most controversial footballers ever to play in the West Midlands. The 30-year-old strutted down the catwalk with his usual swagger on launch night, decked out in a purple three-piece suit, grinning from ear to ear during his interview with host Emma Willis.

He was his usual brash self declaring that he was best known for his time at Tottenham Hotspur and being married to Danielle Lloyd.

The very fact O'Hara had to explain why he was famous to the viewing public makes the word 'celebrity' pretty tenuous, writes Heather Large.

His ex-wife is no stranger to CBB, having found herself caught up in controversy during 2007's series five when, along with the late Jade Goody, S Club 7 singer Jo O'Meara and Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty.

While Calum Best and America's reality couple 'Speidi' – Spencer Pratt and Heidi Montag – lead the betting to be crowned champion, O'Hara finds himself among the favourites to get the boot alongside models Nicola McLean and Jasmine Waltz.

Campaign says pubs need more protection

PUBS must be given greater protection from redevelopment, campaigners say after it was revealed more than 2,000 had now been safeguarded.

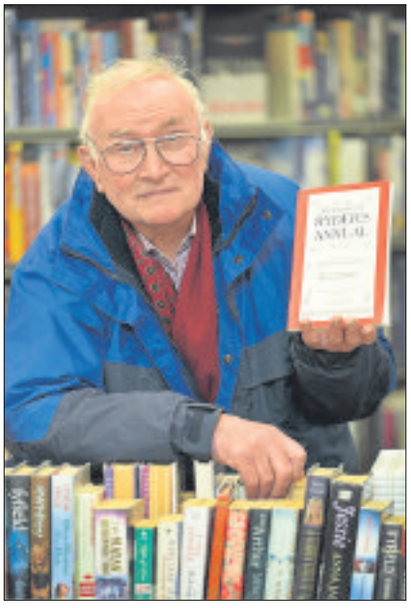
Several pubs in the Black Country have been made assets of community value (ACV) in a bid to stop them from closing. The status makes it more difficult for developers to convert or knock down pubs which are still operating.

The Campaign for Real Ale (Camra) has called on the Government to introduce new measures to ensure owners must always seek planning permission before any changes are made. Colin Valentine, Camra national chairman said: "It is heartening that so many communities across England have spent so much time going through the process of nominating their pub as an Asset of Community Value. This shows a huge appetite for protecting pubs, which are more than just businesses, they are invaluable landmarks in our communities."

Wednesbury's Lower High Street during the early part of the 20th century

The up-and-coming genteel sport of tennis was starting to take off in Wednesbury

In contrast to the industrial times, Wednesbury's cricket scene thrived



Local historian Tony Highfield at Darlaston Library with the new book 'Ryder's Annual'

Ryder's Annual a unique glimpse of growing town

IT has taken a year to put together, but now people have the chance to glimpse into the past and get their hands on a very special piece of Black Country history.

The Very Best of Ryder's Annual book has been put together by Bev Parker and Tony Highfield.

The book features some of the stories and pictures from the well-known Ryder's Annual, that was first published in the 19th century.

The book charts Wednesbury's history from 1878 to 1918 and goes some way in illustrating the people of the town's contribution to the war effort.

Tony Highfield, aged 74, of Bloxwich revealed how he first came up with the idea for the book. He said: "I was walking down Darlaston High Street when a friend of mine, Joan Bytheway, came up to me and said she had been given some old books for a jumble sale.

"She asked whether I'd like to see them. I said I would and when I went round there and saw them, I couldn't believe it. The books were two extremely rare Ryder's Annuals.

"I asked if I could borrow them, which I was told I could, and then I spoke to Bev about them. We decided to begin putting a book together on the best of the annuals, and went and visited Wednesbury Library to look at their archive of annuals, too."

The book was launched on December 3 at Wednesbury Library then at Darlaston Library on December 10. Mindful Gifts CIC, based on Church Street, Darlaston, a not-for-profit organisation, is also sponsoring the book as it specialises in gifts and activities for people with dementia.

It is hoped that the book will provide an insight into the life and times of local people's ancestors. The book also contains an almanac devoted to the First World War.

MEMORY LANE

Report by Jessica Labhart

Mr Highfield said: "I just think it is so interesting to see the lives of the people in the book.

"People might be able to find their ancestors in there, old businesses, churches, groups, clubs and societies." In the introduction of the book, Bev Parker states: "The Ryder Annuals offer a unique insight into life in a successful and rapidly developing area. They feature images of the town's dignitaries, industrialists, councillors, photographs of the town centre and countless adverts describing Black Country businesses.

"For this edition of Ryder's Annual, I have chosen some of my favourite articles, adverts, and photographs from the editions that are to be seen in Wednesbury Library. Some of the images featured in the book are Lower High Street, the Town Hall and Art Gallery, Wednesbury Post Office.

"What I'd say is, this book gives you an idea of what life was like back then, but do speak to granny, before it's too late."

The book costs £9.99.

Miners from Wednesbury, working at a local colliery, in the cage to take them underground for their next shift

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See Page 21

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We love to make people happy

He organised a 90th birthday party for Nelson Mandela and married then divorced both Chrissie Hynde and Patsy Kensit.

He leads the most famous Scottish band of all time – Simple Minds have shipped more than 40 million records, scored five number one hits and headlined Wembley Stadium – and also owns a hotel in Sicily. But these days, Jim Kerr doesn't even get recognised when he steps out of his Glasgow flat in the city's south side. It's funny how life changes as you get older. Don't You Forget About Jim.

Jim Kerr is one of the nicest and most erudite men in rock, though some of his ex-band mates might not think so. They'll be back on the road in spring – they headline Birmingham's Symphony Hall on May 17 – but before that there's the small matter of their beautifully conceived and perfectly formed acoustic album.

Simple Minds Acoustic features 15 reworked tunes from their Imperial Era. There's Chelsea Girl, a reimagined Don't You (Forget About Me) and Glittering Prize and there's a reworked version of Promised You A Miracle, featuring KT Tunstall, alongside a soft-strummed-but-still-ballsy Alive And Kicking. Who knew acoustic music could still sound, well, B.I.G?

Promo

Fans have been asking for an acoustic album since the dawn of time but, until now, he's manfully resisted. Simple question: what changed?

"To be honest, we've been getting asked for this kind of thing since back in the great MTV Unplugged days. It's always been in the air but one of the things that we were always trying to do was to look at new things. We're not great at looking back.

"It came about when we were doing the promo for the last album, Big Music, and Chris Evans, on Radio 2, got us in. He had been a real big fan. He told us to go in and do two or three songs acoustically.

"We bit the bullet and at 7am on the morning we busked about two or three songs."

The reaction was overwhelming. Chris's 11 million listeners were Mad For It, to coin a phrase made popular by Patsy Kensit's subsequent husband. And sure as night follows day, every radio station across Europe wanted a repeat.

Two or three songs on the radio is, of course, different to recording 15 for an album. The idea of an acoustic album was duly shelved and Simple Minds got on with Big Music, their superlative 2014 offering. But while it was easy to ignore the requests to play songs for radio, it was harder to ignore requests backed with hard cash.

"We were to-ing and fro-ing and then our manager came up to us in the January and, as always, money talks. He said a promoter in Switzerland wanted us to play up a mountain. And he wanted us to play acoustically. So we thought 'great'.

But getting one of Britain's great stadium bands to make music suited to a wine bar wasn't easy. How do you put the Hey, Hey, Hey, Hey-yeah, of Don't You (Forget About Me) on at an acoustic club? Not without reason were Simple Minds lauded for their stadium-friendly anthems.

Jim laughs. "We flitted through songs that we were sure would never work. We had always been swept away with production and a big sound. But when we just went down to the song, I didn't realise there was so much underneath."

Test

They booked a gig in London, deciding to test their acoustic set on unsuspecting fans at Hackney Empire.

"Talk about winging it. People from all over the world wanted to see that and we'd never done it before. Talk about being in it at the deep end. We were totally vulnerable.

"There's a kind of prejudice whenever you say the word 'acoustic'. People imagine two blokes on some stool surrounded by candles. But we didn't want to be little. We've got this thing of having energy and passion on stage. It's acoustic but it's a Simple Minds version, which is dynamic and atmospheric and all of that stuff."

And yet, it could all have been so different. There was a time not so many years ago when Simple Minds couldn't get arrested. They were yesterday's men. All washed up. Out of the game. They'd gone from having three consecutive number one platinum albums, followed by two that reached number two, to scratching about at numbers 141 and 80.

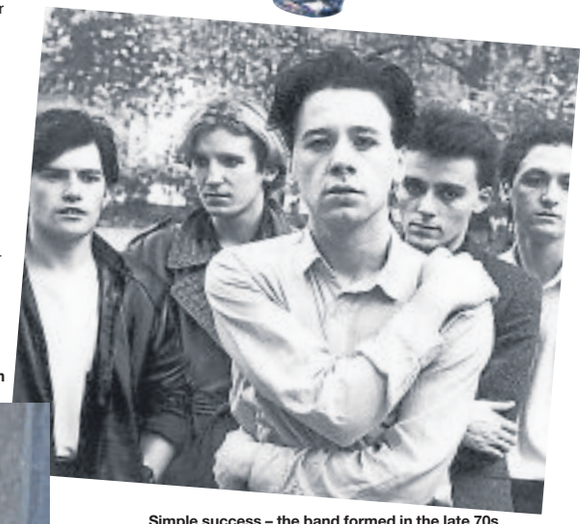
Radar

It would have been easier to call it a day. Jim could have spent his days at his hotel, the Villa Angela, in Sicily. Or, if performance was an itch he really did have to scratch, he could have taken one of the humungous cheques on offer for signing up to an 80s tour.

"We don't have a grudge to bear or anything. For a lot of people Simple Minds were off the radar for a long time and it's hard to get back on it when you've been off it."

So how did they do it? Jim's answer is simple: "Hard work. We've worked the last 10-12 years trying to do quality stuff. A lot of people have wondered why we'd bothered. But we love our story and the position we're in and we love our catalogue. We have different types of fans and for the hardcore, they want to see the band evolving."

Andy Richardson



Simple success – the band formed in the late 70s

Don't you forget – Charlie Burchill with Jim Kerr

Great minds – five number one albums

Dreams come true for Avenged Sevenfold

Californian rockers Avenged Sevenfold promise a spectacular show involving space and artificial intelligence when they play the Genting Arena

BACK when they were 17, they dreamed of headlining festivals and playing alongside Metallica.

Eighteen years later, Avenged Sevenfold are friends with Metallica and have headlined Download Festival.

The Californian rock giants play the Genting Arena in Birmingham on Friday, January 13, supported by heavy metal icons Disturbed. They first performed in the UK in 2004. "Ever since then, the UK has been a special place for us," said lead singer Matt 'M' Shadows.

Of that first tour – which saw the group play the O2 Academy in Birmingham – he says: "We had a little Sprinter van, in which we would spend nine or 10 hour drives just staring at each other. Then we'd hop out and play a show."

Though Matt looks the hardened rocker, with his muscular tattooed body, he is also a devoted father. "I've got a two-year-old and a four-year-old. The four-year-old comes with us to shows but the two-year-old's a maniac – he's just nuts," laughed Matt.

Looking to the band's Birmingham show, Matt said the band had come up with something 'completely different'. "We've worked on something using space and artificial intelligence. We're super excited because the UK is going to be the first place to experience it. We'll be locked and loaded and ready for the show."

For the full interview by Kirsten Rawlins, visit www.expressandstar.com/entertainment/

Boss praises bluesy Ana

GUITAR-SLINGING blues songstress Ana Popovic brings her smoky blend of funk, jazz and blues to Bilston's Robin 2 venue on Tuesday.

She has been described as 'one helluva a guitar player' by Bruce Springsteen and ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons said 'Ana rocks the blues in fine, fine fashion'. The 40-year-old Serbian singer (pictured left) has been nominated for five Blues Music Awards and is a major star on the contemporary blues scene. Her albums, including Still Making History, Can You Stand The Heat and Unconditional, have featured in the US blues charts. She joined the likes of Buddy Guy, Eric Johnson and Zakk Wylde on the recent tribute tour celebrating the music of Jimi Hendrix.

Ana now lives in Memphis USA but was born in Belgrade and grew up in musical family. She grabbed her father's guitar at the age of 15 and began learning from his impressive blues and soul record collection.

She formed her first band, Hush, 20 years ago in Belgrade but the group disbanded after she left her homeland to study jazz in the Netherlands. Soon afterwards she was contributing to a Hendrix tribute album alongside Taj Mahal and former Animals frontman Eric Burdon. She released her first solo album, Hush!, on a German label. Her love of the blues led her to America and she has been based in Tennessee for five years.

Ana and her powerful band are constantly touring, playing major blues, jazz and rock festivals. She is endorsed by Fender and has shared stages with BB King, Buddy Guy, Joe Bonamassa and many others. Her latest album, Trilogy, was released last May.

Tickets cost £15 in advance or £17 on the door and the venue opens at 7.30pm. Visit www.therobin.co.uk or call 01902 401211.

Ex-Deep Purple star is ready to rock the Robin

ROCKER Glenn Hughes is to return to the West Midlands later this month.

Cannock-born singer Hughes, of legendary band Deep Purple and the voice of The KLF's hit What Time Is Love?, is to take to the stage at the Robin 2 venue in Bilston on Monday, January 23.

The US-based rock star, who also fronted popular early 1970s Wolverhampton band Trapeze, in recent years was singer and bassist with rock supergroup Black Country Communion.

Hughes will be supported by Walsall band Stone Broken who were voted runners-up in the Best New Band category of the annual Planet Rock Awards 2016. The first band are on stage at 8pm.

Tickets cost £22.50 in advance or £24.50 on the door. Contact the box office on 01902 401 211 or visit www.therobin.co.uk

Lots of dance delight with the Strictly stars

STRICTLY Come Dancing The Live Tour kicks off in Birmingham on Friday, January 20, with five performances over three days. These feature stars of the 2016 show, including Ed 'Gangnam Style' Balls and glitterball winner Ore Oduba with his new dancer partner Karen Clifton.

There is lots more dance delight in the offing for ballroom and latin fans this month. Brendan Cole brings his new show All Night Long to Wolverhampton Grand Theatre on January 26. Then Anton du Beke and Erin Boag are joined by Strictly singer Lance Ellington for Swing Time at the Symphony Hall, Birmingham, on January 28.

Ballet fans can look forward to the annual visit by the Russian State Ballet of Siberia to the Grand, February 5 to 7, with The Nutracker, Swan Lake and Coppelia.

January busy gig scene sees 2017 off to a flyer

GOSSIP Girl actress Taylor Momsen brings her band The Pretty Reckless to Birmingham's O2 Institute next Friday, January 20, and Two Door Cinema Club have sold out their concert at O2 Academy in Brum on January 24.

White Buffalo, AKA Jake Smith, plays the Institute 2 on January 21, the same night King Creosote (Kenny Anderson) is at Birmingham Town Hall. Watch out for rising star Declan McKenna at the Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath, on January 25.

Major concerts for blues fans include Ana Popovic (see above) at the Robin 2 on Tuesday and the Bilston venue then hosts the Aynsley Lister Band on Thursday and Lil' Jimmy Reed on January 24. Aussie guitar great Tommy Emmanuel performs his It's Never Too Late album at Birmingham Town Hall January 20.

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Sat 21 Jan	Skipton Market, Haworth & Emmerdale	£59
Sat 28 Jan	Beamish & Whitby	£89
Sat 28 Jan	Buxton Market & Southport	£59
Sat 28 Jan	Durham & Whitby Luxury	£69
Sat 4 Feb	Chesterfield Market & York	£59
Sat 4 Feb	Llandudno, Chester & Conwy Valley	£59
Sat 4 Feb	Torquay & Exeter	£59
Sat 11 Feb	Beautiful Windermere & Skipton Market	£59
Sat 11 Feb	Canterbury & Riverside London	£79
Sat 11 Feb	Eastbourne & Brighton	£59
Sat 11 Feb	Norwich, Yarmouth & The Broads	£59
Sat 11 Feb	Tower of London & Canterbury	£99
Sat 18 Feb	Torquay & Bath	£59

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Mon 6 Feb	4	Disneyland Spectacular at The B&B Hotel (B&B)	£269
Mon 6 Feb	4	Ostend Special Breakaway	£119
Fri 10 Feb	4	Disneyland Spectacular at Dream Castle (B&B)	£339
Fri 10 Feb	7	Lemon Festival & Italian Riviera Inclusive	£339
Fri 10 Feb	4	Paris Weekend Superdeal (B&B)	£149
Fri 10 Feb	7	Venice Carnival Spectacular (2 evening meals)	£299
Mon 13 Feb	5	Amsterdam, Cologne & Valkenburg	£239
Sun 19 Feb	7	Lake Garda & Venice All-Inclusive	£339
Sun 19 Feb	14	Spring Sunshine on the Costa Brava Coast	£499
Mon 20 Feb	4	Disneyland Paris at the Magic Circus (B&B)	£349
Mon 20 Feb	5	Ostend All Inclusive	£229

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2 DAYS

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- Coach travel with reserved seating
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2 DAY SHOWTIME BREAKS

Fri 3 Feb	Motown's Greatest Hits - Live in Manchester	£89
Sat 4 Feb	London & Star Wars Identities at the O2 (B&B)	£99
Sat 4 Feb	Showaddywaddy - Live in Manchester	£99
Sat 4 Feb	Stand By Me - The Ben E King Revue	£99
Sat 4 Feb	Strictly Come Dancing - The Live Tour!	£119
Sat 11 Jan	The Story of The Bee Gees	£89
Wed 15 Feb	Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom & Blackpool Funtime	£79
Sat 18 Feb	Blood Brothers & Liverpool Special	£99
Sat 18 Feb	Motown The Musical - London Showtime (B&B)	£139
Sat 18 Feb	School of Rock - London Showtime (B&B)	£139
Fri 24 Feb	Paul Carrack - Live in Concert (B&B)	£99
Sat 25 Feb	Cirque Du Soleil - Spectacular!	£139
Sat 25 Feb	Les Miserables - London Showtime (B&B)	£149
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Sat 25 Feb	Sister Act & Historic York	£99

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Sat 18 Mar	Ramsbottom Chocolate Festival & The Lakes	£79
Sat 25 Mar	Manchester Bike Show & Liverpool	£89
Sat 1 Apr	Victoria at Harewood House	£89
Sat 15 Apr	London & The Tall Ships Regatta Easter Special	£119
Sat 22 Apr	Cotswolds Wartime 1940's Special	£89
Sat 22 Apr	Skipton Market & Harrogate Flower Show	£99
Tue 25 Apr	Gino's Italian Escape - Live!	£99
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Sat 13 May	Abingdon Airshow & Historic Bath	£99
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Chelsea - Flower Show
2 DAYS

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- Coach travel with reserved seating
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Harry Potter - Studio Tour
2 DAYS

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Sat 18 February	£119	Sat 15 April	£119
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- Coach travel with reserved seating
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- Inclusive admission to the Harry Potter Studios Tour at Warner Bros Studios.

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Sat 18 Feb	Legoland Discovery & Blackpool funtime	£79
Sat 18 Feb	Polar Bears, Penguins & Kingdom of Ice	£99
Sat 18 Mar	Legoland Spectacular (B&B)	£99
Sat 15 Apr	Legoland Spectacular (B&B)	£119
Sat 15 Apr	Polar Bears, Penguins & Kingdom of Ice	£99
Sat 22 Apr	Longleat Safari Park, Jungle Cruise & Windsor	£99
Sat 29 Apr	Legoland Discovery & Blackpool Funtime	£89
Sat 20 May	Polar Bears, Penguins & Kingdom of Ice	£89
Sat 27 May	Legoland Spectacular (B&B)	£119
Sat 27 May	Longleat Safari Park, Jungle Cruise & Windsor	£99
Sat 3 Jun	Legoland Discovery & Blackpool Funtime	£89
Sat 17 Jun	Polar Bears, Penguins & Kingdom of Ice	£99
Sat 24 Jun	Legoland Spectacular (B&B)	£119
Sat 24 Jun	Longleat Safari Park, Jungle Cruise & Windsor	£99
Sat 1 Jul	Legoland Discovery & Blackpool Funtime	£89

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NATIONAL HOLIDAYS

CHOICE

Tom Hardy

Taboo
(BBC1, 9.15pm)
James Delaney's shocking return to London society has set tongues wagging, but the swarthy adventurer's mission is far from complete. The city's residents view him with hostility and suspicion, but undeterred by their derision, James begins to enlist allies in his quest to reclaim his legacy and establish a new life for himself. However, an unexpected arrival at the reading of his father's will threatens to disrupt James's plans, and the true, poisonous nature of his new-found inheritance makes itself known. Historical drama, starring Tom Hardy, Leo Bill, Jessie Buckley, Oona Chaplin, Richard Dixon, Mark Gatiss, Jefferson Hall and David Hayman.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen. **11.30** The Best Dishes Ever. (R) **12.00** Football Focus. **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** Bargain Hunt. (R) **2.15** Wanted Down Under. (R) **3.15** Escape to the Country. (R) **4.00** Final Score. **5.20** BBC News. **5.30** Regional Programme. **5.40** Celebrity Mastermind.

6.10 Pointless Celebrities. Jilly Goolden, Olly Smith, Sophie Grigson Michael Caines, Fay Maschler, Brian Turner, Cyrus Todiwala and Tony Singh compete in a "food and drink" edition of the unorthodox quiz.

7.00 Let It Shine. Graham Norton and Mel Giedroyc's mission to assemble a new boyband for a nation-touring musical continues. This time, the hopeful stars continue with their solo auditions in front of a studio audience in Manchester. Judges Gary Barlow, Dannii Minogue, Martin Kemp and Amber Riley must decide whether any of the would-be pop princes are worthy of a place in Let It Shine's five-strong headline act, while Graham and Mel keep viewers up to date with all the backstage action, fun and gossip.

8.25 Casualty. A scuffle at an illegal rave leads an over-enthusiastic sergeant causing serious head injuries to a 19-year-old man and later planting drugs in his belongings to corroborate his claim that he had been assaulted twice by his quarry. Jacob is dubious about the sergeant's story and takes a police constable to one side in an attempt to persuade her not be an accomplice to her superior's crooked ways. Elsewhere, Elle's career is on the line as Connie goes on the warpath.

9.15 Taboo. James Delaney sets about enlisting allies to help him reclaim his legacy, but an unexpected arrival at the reading of his father's will threatens to disrupt his plans.

10.15 BBC News; Weather; National Lottery Update.

10.30 Match of the Day. Gary Lineker presents action from the latest Premier League matches, including Leicester City v Chelsea at the King Power Stadium and Swansea City v Arsenal at the Liberty Stadium.

12.00 Film: The Ring. (2002) **1.45** Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.50** BBC News.

BBC2

6.45 Film: Higher and Higher. (1943) Musical comedy, with Jack Haley and Frank Sinatra. **8.15 Film:** The Magic Box. (1951) Biopic of cinema pioneer William Friese-Greene, starring Robert Donat. **10.00** Secret Britain. (R) **11.00** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **12.00** Exploring China: A Culinary Adventure. (R) **1.00 Film:** Ice Station Zebra. (1968) An American submarine crew races to reach a Soviet satellite that has crash-landed near a British research station in the Arctic. Adventure, with Rock Hudson and Patrick McGoohan. **3.20** Flog It! (R) **4.00** Mastermind. (R) **4.30** University Challenge. (R) **5.00** Only Connect. (R) **5.30** The World's Most Extraordinary Homes. (R)

6.30 Thailand: Earth's Tropical Paradise. Exploring the forests, plains and bustling cities of Central Thailand, an area known as the nation's rice bowl. The programme explores how people live alongside animals in these areas, and the spiritual fulfillment to be found in these relationships. Narrated by Sophie Okonedo. (R)

7.30 Britain's Ancient Capital: Secrets of Orkney. Neil Oliver, Chris Packham, Andy Torbet and Shini Somara investigate recent archaeological finds on the archipelago that challenge the received wisdom on Stone Age Britain, joining hundreds of archaeologists from around the world who have gathered in the Orkneys at one of Europe's biggest digs. (R)

8.30 Dad's Army. Captain Mainwaring puts the defence of the realm before personal pride, resulting in him nearly losing command of the platoon. Classic comedy with the Home Guard, starring Arthur Lowe and John Le Mesurier. (R)

9.00 Imagine: Marlon Brando. Alan Yentob presents another documentary from the worlds of art and culture.

10.40 Film: On the Waterfront. (1954) A former boxer reduced to working for a gangster has his conscience pricked when he sees his boss's thugs kill a man. Drama, starring Marlon Brando, Lee J Cobb and Eva Marie Saint.

12.25 Film: Lay the Favorite. (2012) A Las Vegas cocktail waitress proves a success as a professional gambler, but arouses the jealousy of her mentor's wife. Comedy, starring Rebecca Hall. **1.50** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. **6.10** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.25** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.45** Sooty. (R) **6.55** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.00** Super 4. (R) **7.15** Oddbods. (R) **7.20** Oddbods. (R) **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **7.55** Scrambled!: Horrid Henry. (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: The Powerpuff Girls. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Bear Grylls Survival School. **9.05** Scrambled!: Adventure Time. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** Rebound. (R) **10.25** Guess This House. (R) **11.25** Judge Rinder. (R) **12.30** ITV News; Weather. **12.40** River Monsters. (R) **1.10** Bargain Shop Wars. (R) **1.40 Film:** The Mummy Returns. (2001) Fantasy adventure sequel, starring Brendan Fraser. **4.05** Dance Dance Dance. (R) **5.35** Regional Programme ; Weather.**5.45** ITV News; Weather.

6.00 The Brits Are Coming.

7.00 Ninja Warrior UK. Competitors from across the UK test their strength, speed and courage in this obstacle-course challenge, hosted by Ben Shephard, Rochelle Humes and Chris Kamara.

8.00 The Voice UK. The spinning-chair singing contest continues, as another selection of would-be stars put their musical skills to the test via the ears of new coach line-up Jennifer Hudson, Gavin Rossdale, Will.i.am and Tom Jones, who are tasked with selecting more acts to champion in the blind auditions. Sitting with their backs to the prospective pop-icons, the coaches select the ones they like based on their vocal abilities alone, but as always, it remains to be seen whether this batch of contestants will have what it takes to reach the end of the contest and claim that lucrative record contract with Polydor. Emma Willis is on hand to oversee proceedings.

9.30 Through the Keyhole. Keith Lemon challenges Eamonn Holmes, Emma Bunton and Jonathan Ross to guess the identities of the celebrities whose homes he peruses.

10.30 ITV News; Weather.

10.45 Film: Terminator 2: Judgment Day. (1991) Sci-fi adventure sequel.

1.15 Jackpot247. **3.00** Who's Doing the Dishes? (R) **3.50** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.15 The King of Queens. (R) **6.40** The King of Queens. (R) **7.05** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **10.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **10.25** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **10.55** The Simpsons. (R) **11.25** The Simpsons. (R) **11.55** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. (R) **12.55** Jamie and Jimmy's Friday Night Feast. (R) **2.00** Darts: BDO Lakeside World Professional Championships. The eighth day of the BDO World Championships.

6.30 Channel 4 News.

7.00 Penelope Keith's Hidden Villages. Penelope Keith starts her journey in the Cotswolds, and explores the celebrated village of Bibury, as well as Kelmscott, the home of William Morris; Slade, the village setting of a book by Laurie Lee; Down Ampney, and Hook Norton. Plus, she visits a village fete in Ebrington. (R)

8.00 Great Canal Journeys. Timothy West and Prunella Scales embark on more waterway adventures, beginning 14 miles west of Venice on the Brenta, a river that was first canalised in the 13th century. Lined with palaces which were once holiday homes for Venetian nobility, they follow the route that Casanova and Lord Byron took to the city. After crossing the Venetian lagoon, Tim and Pru arrive at St Mark's Square, where they escape the busy Grand Canal and discover the tranquillity and beauty of the smaller canals that tourists rarely see. (R)

9.00 Film: Oblivion. (2013) A repairman is assigned to salvage the remaining resources from Earth, which has been left a devastated wasteland after a war with an alien race. He discovers a human survivor on the surface of the planet, an encounter that exposes secrets from the past that threaten the future of the human race. Sci-fi adventure, starring Tom Cruise and Morgan Freeman.

11.30 Film: Immortals. (2011) A man is chosen by the Greek gods to prevent a power-mad king from conquering the human and immortal worlds. Mythological adventure, with Henry Cavill.

1.35 Hollyoaks. **3.35** Win It Cook It. (R) **4.05** Hoarder SOS. (R) **5.00** Location, Location, Location. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **9.10** The Fairly OddParents. (R) **9.45** Big Bash Cricket Live. **1.30** The Hotel Inspector. (R) **2.30** Budgies Make You Laugh Out Loud. (R) **3.30** Dogs Make You Laugh Out Loud 2. (R) **4.25** Dogs Make You Laugh Out Loud 3. (R) **5.25** Kittens Make You Laugh Out Loud. (R)

6.25 NCIS: Los Angeles. Sam goes undercover as a bomb specialist when he investigates the death of a demolition expert, but faces a race against time to find explosives located across LA.

7.10 NCIS: Los Angeles. The team investigates when a reporter is murdered as she prepares to break a story about a mysterious Libyan freedom fighter named El-Libi.

8.00 NCIS. Gibbs throws himself back into his work following his near-death experience, updating his appearance and tackling a new risky case alongside DEA agent Luis Mitchell, who wants help bringing down a drugs cartel. Concerned about his colleague's apparent enthusiasm to re-enter the field, DiNozzo discovers Mitchell is the son of a former NCIS agent who gave his life trying to save Gibbs' late wife and daughter, and this attachment is causing Gibbs to break his own rule against personal involvement in a case. However, danger is posed by Benson Long, the cartel's head, and Mitchell's top target.

8.55 5 News Weekend.

9.00 Football on 5: The Championship. George Riley and Lynsey Hipgrave introduce action from the latest fixtures, which included Bristol City v Cardiff City at Ashton Gate, Fulham v Barnsley at Craven Cottage, and Rotherham United v Norwich City at AESSEAL New York Stadium.

10.00 Football on 5: Goal Rush. George Riley and Lynsey Hipgrave introduce all the goals from the latest matches in Leagues One and Two, including Walsall v Sheffield United, and Plymouth Argyle v Stevenage.

10.30 Celebrity Big Brother. Highlights of the housemates' past 24 hours under the all-seeing eye of Big Brother.

11.30 Lip Sync Battle UK: Alexander Armstrong vs Jimmy Carr. (R)

12.00 SuperCasino. **3.05** Celebrity Big Brother. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Timeshift: The Golden Age of Coach Travel **8.00** Inside Chernobyl's Mega Tomb **9.00** Lost Kingdoms of Central America **10.00** The Young Montalbano **11.45** Top of the Pops: 1983 **12.20** Elvis Costello: Mystery Dance **1.20** Later Presents – Elvis Costello in Concert **2.20** Great Guitar Riffs at the BBC **3.20** Close

ITV2
11.20 The Big Quiz – Coronation Street v Emmerdale **12.25** Ninja Warrior UK **1.30** 50 Greatest Harry Potter Moments **3.05 Film:** Horrid Henry: The Movie (2011) **4.05** FYI Daily **4.10 Film:** Horrid Henry: The Movie (2011) **4.55 Film:** Hotel Transylvania (2012) **5.55** FYI Daily **6.00 Film:** Hotel Transylvania (2012) **6.45 Film:** The Amazing Spider-Man 2 (2014) **7.45** FYI Daily **7.50 Film:** The Amazing Spider-Man 2 (2014) **9.30 Film:** Wanted (2008) **10.30** FYI Daily **10.35 Film:** Wanted (2008) **11.40** Family Guy **1.05** American Dad! **2.00** Dads **2.20** Safeword **3.00** Teleshopping

ITV3
11.25 Film: Hidden Treasure (2001) **1.30** A Touch of Frost **6.00** Midsomer Murders **8.00** Doc Martin **9.00** Midsomer Murders **11.00** Lewis **1.00** Blue Murder **2.00** ITV3 Nightscreen **2.30** Teleshopping

ITV4
11.00 Pawn Stars **11.30 Film:** Apache (1954) **12.35** FYI Daily **12.40 Film:** Apache (1954) **1.20** Nijinsky's Triple Crown **1.30** ITV Racing Live from Warwick and Kempton Park. Coverage of races from Warwick and Kempton Park. **4.00 Film:** Red River (1948) **5.05** FYI Daily **5.10 Film:** Red River (1948) **6.40** Pawn Stars **7.05** Mr Bean **8.10** River Monsters **9.15 Film:** The Client (1994) **10.20** FYI Daily **10.25 Film:** The Client (1994) **11.40 Film:** Don't Say a Word (2001) **12.50** FYI Daily **12.55 Film:** Don't Say a Word (2001) **2.00** Hell on Wheels **2.50** ITV4 Nightscreen

E4
11.00 Baby Daddy **12.00** Black-ish **1.00** Young & Hungry **2.00** The Goldbergs **4.00** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **5.00** The Big Bang Theory **9.00 Film:** Friends with Benefits (2011) **11.15** Gogglebox **1.25** The Inbetweeners **2.25** Chewing Gum **2.50** Tattoo Fixers **3.45** Bad Robots **4.10** Suburgatory **4.50** Revenge

Film4
11.00 The Black Arrow (1948) **1.00** The Jane Austen Book Club (2007) **3.05** First Daughter (2004) **5.15** The Spy Next Door (2010) **7.00** Legend (1985) **9.00** The Family (2013) **11.15** Blue Ruin (2014) **1.00** Bully (2001) **3.20** Close

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CHOICE

Stephen McGann

Call the Midwife: The Casebook (BBC1, 5.05pm)

Stephen McGann presents a look at the true stories behind the drama series, meeting midwives, nuns and doctors who worked delivering babies during the 1950s and 1960s to hear their accounts of the social and medical changes of the period. He talks to a former colleague of Jennifer Worth, writer of the original Call the Midwife books, and a photographer who documented the social conditions of the time. Stephen also returns to the home where he was born to share his mother's own story of childbirth.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.30** Match of the Day. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Regional Programme. **12.15** Bargain Hunt. (R) **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **2.00** Wanted Down Under Revisited. (R) **2.45** Escape to the Country. (R) **3.30** Spy in the Wild. (R) **4.30** Songs of Praise. **5.05** Call the Midwife: The Casebook.

6.05 BBC News.

6.20 Regional Programme.

6.30 Countryfile. The programme comes from Carmarthenshire, where Matt Baker explores the history of the region's sand dunes and Helen Skelton visits the National Botanic Garden of Wales, where she discovers how bees are being prepared for winter and reports on a plan to map the DNA of all the UK's flowers. Plus, Falklands veteran Simon Weston presents a guide to South Wales, Tom Heap looks at how otters pose a threat to fisheries, and Adam Henson presents the second of two reports on farming in New Zealand. Including weather for the week ahead.

7.30 Antiques Roadshow Holocaust Memorial. Fiona Bruce and the team examine items connected to the Holocaust and listen to the personal stories of survivors. Plus, a look at the work of the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation.

8.30 Still Open All Hours. David Jason stars as Granville in this follow-up to Open All Hours, now running the shop with his son Leroy after inheriting the business from Arkwright.

9.00 Sherlock. Sherlock and John face their greatest challenge as the duo's long-buried secrets come to light and a threat from the past seems to have returned from the dead. They discover an elusive enemy has been playing a very long game – which is now reaching its devastating conclusion. Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman star in the conclusion of the fourth series of the detective drama. Last in the series.

10.30 BBC News.

10.50 Regional Programme.

11.00 The Graham Norton Show. (R)

11.45 The Celebrity Apprentice USA.

1.10 Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.15** BBC News.

BBC2

6.15 A to Z of TV Gardening. (R) **7.00** Big Dreams Small Spaces. (R) **8.00** An Island Parish. (R) **8.30** The Edible Garden. (R) **9.00** Countryfile. (R) **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.30** Talking Snooker. **12.15** MOTD2 Extra. **1.00** Live Snooker: The Masters. Ronnie O'Sullivan v Liang Wenbo. **5.15** Yellowstone: The Toughest Spring. (R)

6.15 Ski Sunday. Highlights of the men's World Cup downhill on the Lauberhorn in Wengen, Switzerland. Plus, a feature on Swiss freerider Jeremie Heitz.

7.00 City in the Sky. Dallas Campbell and Dr Hannah Fry present a documentary exploring aviation, beginning with a look at the challenges of getting aircraft into the air. The programme features a visit to the world's busiest airport to discover the work that goes into getting its millions of visitors off the ground. Plus, the construction of the world's largest passenger plane and the dangers of taking off from the coldest city on Earth. (R)

8.00 Dragons' Den. Evan Davis ushers another batch of would-be entrepreneurs before the panel's judgment. An inventor who claims to have created a new kind of surfboard and a parachute for Nasa reveals his idea for transforming the garden shed, Touker Suleyman agrees to road test a waxing product, and one applicant makes a shocking revelation as he tells the story of sleeping on his office floor.

9.00 Thailand: Earth's Tropical Paradise. The mountains and forests of Northern Thailand, where unusual partnerships develop between animals and people. Last in the series.

10.00 Match of the Day 2. Mark Chapman reviews the day's Premier League action, featuring Manchester United v Liverpool at Old Trafford and Everton v Manchester City at Goodison Park.

10.50 QI XL. Guests Matt Lucas, Jerry Springer and Cariad Lloyd join regular panellist Alan Davies and host Sandi Toksvig to contemplate the theme "noodles" in this extended episode.

11.35 Snooker: The Masters. Ding Junhui v Kyren Wilson. Hazel Irvine presents action.

12.25 Snooker: The Masters – Extra. **2.25** Sign Zone: Question Time. (R) **3.25** Holby City. (R) **4.25** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. **6.10** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.25** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.45** Sooty. (R) **6.55** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.00** Super 4. (R) **7.15** Oddbods. (R) **7.20** Oddbods. (R) **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **7.55** Scrambled!: Horrid Henry. (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: The Powerpuff Girls. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Ultimate Spider-Man: Web Warriors. **9.05** Scrambled!: Adventure Time. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** Countrywise. (R) **10.00** Peston on Sunday. **11.00** Gino's Italian Escape: Hidden Italy. (R) **11.30** Chopping Block. (R) **12.30** ITV News; Weather. **12.35** Judge Rinder. (R) **1.35** Tipping Point. (R) **2.35** Ninja Warrior UK. (R) **3.35** The Voice UK. (R) **5.05** Regional Programme ; Weather.**5.15** ITV News; Weather. **5.30** The Chase: Celebrity Special. (R)

6.30 Dance Dance Dance. Alesha Dixon and Will Best host the second stage of the celebrity dance contest, in which the contestants must impress judges Ashley Banjo, Tina Landon and Timor Steffens by recreating famous music videos by Christina Aguilera and Britney Spears – as well as a classic scene from the Blues Brothers.

8.00 Endeavour. The leader of a censorship campaign comes to Oxford on a speaking tour, and Morse is charged with protecting her in light of a series of death threats. A bricklayer working on a controversial pop singer's house is later found dead, and when a second killing occurs, a connection emerges to the speaker's movement, plunging Morse into the middle of a conflict over the nature of British culture.

10.00 ITV News; Weather.

10.15 Peston on Sunday. Political magazine, presented by Robert Peston, with ITV News National Editor Allegra Stratton. (R)

11.15 The Brits Are Coming. A special live show announcing which artists are in the running to receive gongs at this year's Brit Award ceremony. Includes performances by Olly Murs, Craig David and more. (R)

12.15 Jackpot247. Interactive gaming. **3.00** Chopping Block. (R) **3.50** ITV Nightscreen. **5.05** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.20 The King of Queens. (R) **6.45** The King of Queens. (R) **7.10** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** The Simpsons. (R) **12.55** The Simpsons. (R) **1.25** The Simpsons. (R) **1.55 Film:** St Trinian's 2: The Legend of Fritton's Gold. (2009) Comedy sequel, starring Rupert Everett. **3.55** Channel 4 News. **4.15** Darts: BDO Lakeside World Professional Championships. The men's final of the BDO World Championships.

8.00 Walking the Americas. The second leg of Levison Wood's four-month trek across Central America involves walking for 400 miles and travelling through three different countries. He visits a unique Caribbean town that is populated by the descendants of shipwrecked African slaves, treks through a mountain region, and makes his way through gang territories in one of the world's most violent cities.

9.00 Film: Bad Neighbours. (2014) Premiere. A couple living in suburbia and adjusting to new parenthood are determined to prove they can still be cool when a household of students moves in next door. However, when their raucous neighbours' wild parties disrupt their lives, they decide to fight back, leading to a vicious cycle of one-upmanship. Comedy, starring Seth Rogen, Zac Efron and Rose Byrne.

10.50 8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown. Jimmy Carr hosts, as Sean Lock and Stephen Mangan team up against Noel Fielding and Fay Ripley. The Brett Domino Trio assist Susie Dent in Dictionary Corner. (R)

11.55 Film: Hanna. (2011) A teenage girl trained by her father to be an assassin travels the world on a secret mission, pursued by the CIA. Action thriller, with Saoirse Ronan and Cate Blanchett.

1.55 How to Lose Weight Well. Dr Xand van Tulleken and dietician Hala El-Shafie help a duo slim down for a birthday bash in seven days, and water-only fasts are investigated. (R) **2.50** The Autistic Gardener. The team tries to make a small garden look bigger. (R) **3.45** Jamie's Comfort Food. Jamie Oliver prepares curried fish pie. **3.55** Location, Location, Location. (R) **5.50** 3rd Rock from the Sun. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Milkshake! Monkey. **6.05** Milkshake! Bop Box. (R) **6.10** Peppa Pig. (R) **6.15** Angelina Ballerina. (R) **6.25** Bob the Builder. (R) **6.40** Wanda and the Alien. (R) **6.50** Zack and Quack. (R) **7.00** Seaside Antics. (R) **7.05** Fireman Sam. (R) **7.15** Pip Ahoy! (R) **7.30** Little Princess. (R) **7.40** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.55** Blaze and the Monster Machines. (R) **8.25** Noddy in Toyland. (R) **8.40** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **8.55** Shimmer and Shine. (R) **9.20** Peppa Pig. (R) **9.30** Peppa Pig. (R) **9.40** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.55** The Fairly OddParents. (R) **10.30** Football on 5: The Championship. (R) **11.25** Football on 5: Goal Rush. (R) **12.00** Funniest Fails, Falls & Flops. (R) **12.25 Film:** Message in a Bottle. (1999) Romantic drama, with Kevin Costner and Robin Wright. **2.50 Film:** Six Days Seven Nights. (1998) Romantic adventure, starring Harrison Ford and Anne Heche. **4.45 Film:** You've Got Mail. (1998) Romantic comedy, starring Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan.

7.00 Now That's Funny! A collection of internet-sourced videos with a family friendly hook, featuring laugh-out-loud unexpected personal moments now being shared with the world. (R)

8.00 Brides Make You Laugh Out Loud. Iain Lee narrates a collection of internet videos featuring bizarre and humorous weddings.

8.55 5 News Weekend.

9.00 Celebrity Big Brother. A chance to catch up with the latest events inside the house as the celebrities cope with living under constant surveillance, with all the arguments and alliances, as well as the revelations in the diary room.

10.05 Celebrity Botched Up Bodies. Alex Reid undergoes surgery on his nose to help his breathing, while Geordie Shore's Marnie Simpson discusses how her breast enhancement went badly wrong.

11.05 The Roast of Donald Trump. An event from 2011 in which the business mogul faces a barrage of insults from Seth MacFarlane, Gilbert Gottfried, Whitney Cummings, Snoop Dogg, Larry King and Marlee Matlin. (R)

12.35 Impractical Jokers UK. **1.00** SuperCasino. **3.10 Film:** Under the Tuscan Sun. (2003) **4.50** Divine Designs. (R) **5.40** Angels of Jarm. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four

7.00 David Starkey's Music & Monarchy **8.00** Sword, Musket & Machine Gun: Britain's Armed History **9.00** Rich Hall's Presidential Grudge Match **10.30** Bowie at the BBC **11.30** John Berger: The Art of Looking **12.25** Sound of Musicals with Neil Brand **1.25** Lost Kingdoms of Central America **2.25** Roger Bannister: Everest on the Track **3.25** Close

ITV2

1.40 2Awesome: Side Effects **2.20** 2Awesome: Third Wheel **2.40** 2Awesome: LA Story **3.00 Film:** Space Jam (1996) **4.00** FYI Daily **4.05 Film:** Space Jam (1996) **4.45 Film:** Despicable Me 2 (2013) **5.45** FYI Daily **5.50 Film:** Despicable Me 2 (2013) **6.45 Film:** The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey (2012) **7.45** FYI Daily **7.50 Film:** The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey (2012) **10.00** Family Guy **11.55** American Dad! **12.55** The Cleveland Show **1.50** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **2.15** Teleshopping **5.45** ITV2 Nightscreen

ITV3

2.05 A Touch of Frost **4.20 Film:** Columbo: How to Dial a Murder (1978) **6.00** Midsomer Murders **8.00** This Time Next Year **9.00** Tonight at the London Palladium **10.00** Birds of a Feather **10.30 Film:** The English Patient (1996) **11.35** FYI Daily **11.40 Film:** The English Patient (1996) **1.40** A Touch of Frost **3.35** May the Best House Win **5.20** You're Only Young Twice **5.40** ITV3 Nightscreen

ITV4

4.35 Film: The Dam Busters (1954) **5.35** FYI Daily **5.40 Film:** The Dam Busters (1954) **7.10** When Ali Came to Britain **8.15 Film:** Police Academy 4: Citizens on Patrol (1987) **9.15** FYI Daily **9.20 Film:** Police Academy 4: Citizens on Patrol (1987) **10.00 Film:** Maximum Conviction (2012) **11.00** FYI Daily **11.05 Film:** Maximum Conviction (2012) **12.05** River Monsters **1.10** Hell on Wheels **2.05** I Want That Car **2.55** ITV4 Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping

E4

2.20 Rude(ish) Tube Shorts **2.30** The Goldbergs **5.00** The Big Bang Theory **8.00 Film:** Johnny English Reborn (2011) **10.05** Tattoo Fixers **11.10** Virtually Famous **12.00** The Inbetweeners **1.05** Gogglebox **2.10** Rude Tube: Ultimate Stunts **3.05** Rude Tube

Film4

11.00 The Frogmen (1951) **1.00** One Fine Day (1996) **3.10** Sword of Sherwood Forest (1960) **4.50** Flight of the Navigator (1986) **6.35** Beautiful Creatures (2013) **9.00** Prometheus (2012)

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PICK OF THE WEEK

FILM CHOICES

MONDAY
Mother Betrayed, Channel 5, 3.20pm
Five years after her husband is run off the road and killed by a mysterious driver, the head of a prosperous architectural firm decides to remarry. However, she's unaware that her new spouse has a devious plan to steal her daughter, her sanity and even her life. Psychological thriller, starring Lynn Collins. (2015)

TUESDAY
Who Killed My Husband?, Channel 5, 3.15pm
A widowed police officer embarks on a dangerous mission to generate enough income to pay for her daughter's hospital bills, causing her to question how far she is willing to go to save her child. Thriller, starring Andrea Bowen and Jim Thorburn. (1900)

WEDNESDAY
What Doesn't Kill You, BBC1, 11.45pm
Two childhood friends become criminals in the employ of a Boston mobster, leading one to develop a drug habit that nearly costs him his wife and children. After a spell in prison, he resolves to make a fresh start as a devoted family man, but his friend tempts him with the promise of an armoured car robbery. Crime drama, starring Mark Ruffalo. (2008)

Reasonable Doubt, Friday, BBC1, 11.55pm

THURSDAY
Twisted Sisters, Channel 5, 3.15pm
College freshman Sarah joins her mother's former sorority, but comes to learn it is run like a ruthless business rather than a sisterhood, promoting cut-throat seduction and destruction behind the scenes. As a consequence, she soon finds herself caught up in a devious power game that forces her to question where her true loyalties lie. Drama, starring Sierra McCormick and Cassidy Gifford. (2016)

FRIDAY
Reasonable Doubt, BBC1, 11.55pm
District attorney Mitch Brockden is involved in a fatal hit-and-run incident, and a convicted felon is charged with his crime. Mitch's guilt drives him to throw out the case when it comes to trial – but when the accused later goes on a killing spree, he feels compelled to bring him to justice personally. Crime thriller, starring Dominic Cooper and Samuel L Jackson. (2014)

Lucy's decision proves far from child's play

Lee Mack once said that if Lee and Lucy got together it would be the end of this show.

So after the pair's surprise Christmas marriage in 2015, fans thought they'd probably seen the last of hit comedy series. Mack's career has gone from strength to strength and he is now established as one of the UK's most recognisable comics.

Last year saw him return as resident team captain on Would I Lie To You?, host Duck Quacks Don't Echo, while in 2017 he will make his London West End debut alongside Griff Rhys Jones in the The Miser.

But despite these other commitments, thankfully, Mack changed his mind about the show in which he made his name, and Not Going Out remains the longest-running UK television sitcom still on-air.

Plus, a ninth and 10th series have also been green-lit by the Beeb, so Lee and Lucy (Sally Bretton) are not going anywhere just yet.

One thing that perhaps changed Mack's mind was a shift in direction for the sitcom, which now features more of a family element instead of the offbeat romantic comedy theme which dominated its first decade.

In the 10 years since Not Going Out began, Mack has himself become a father of three.

"It is quite weird writing about family life," he admitted in a TV interview last year. "We've slowed it down a bit, less jokes and more children's nappies."

Shane Allen, Controller of Comedy Commissioning at the BBC, is thrilled that Lee and Lucy are back: "Not Going Out is on its way to modern classic status as it clocks up another richly gag-packed and comic incident-heavy series," he says.

"The jump forward introduction of their kids provides Lee and Lucy with a new family domestic setting and springboard to broaden out their world from a 'will they, won't they?' dynamic to the 'why the hell have we?' that comes with parenting."

At the end of the last run, Lee and Lucy were a newlywed couple having their first child.

Fast forward seven years, and there are some major new additions to their chaotic world – baby Charlie now has five year-old twin siblings, Benji and Molly.

So how has Lee survived these dramatic life changes? And how are the parents finding the joy/relentless onslaught of bringing up kids?

If this wasn't enough for them to contend with, combine that with tricky family members in the form of Lee's lovably feckless father Frank (Bobby Ball), and close friends including the world-weary, or more specifically wife-weary, Toby (Hugh Dennis) and uptight ice-queen Anna (Abigail Cruttenden).

Thankfully, Lucy's parents Geoffrey (Geoffrey Whitehead) and Wendy (Deborah Grant) are on hand.

But what exactly do they make of Lee and Lucy's often mad house?

Last week we saw Lee trying to get the 'romance' with his wife back on track.

And in this second instalment, Lucy causes grave offence by choosing the wrong babysitter for their trio of offspring when the couple plan a night on the tiles.

Bobby Ball and Lee Mack star in Not Going Out, Friday, BBC1, 9.30pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY
The Undateables
Channel 4, 9pm
Many of us have difficult navigating the unwritten rules of dating, but it's been particularly hard for 22-year-old Jamie, whose Asperger syndrome means he struggles to understand anything that isn't logical. However, he does have a passion for military history and strategy so as he takes his first steps into the world of relationships, he is armed with a plan. Luke, 26, from Hampshire, who is autistic, also believes in being prepared when it comes to love – although he sometimes finds it hard to make conversation, he's taught himself phrases in 15 different languages. But will his linguistic skills impress his date Alice, or will something be lost in translation? Meanwhile, Lizzie, 29 has a learning disability that means she struggles with some everyday tasks, but she still loves to shop – and she's now in the market for a boyfriend.

TUESDAY
How to Lose Weight Well
Channel 4, 8pm
Dr Xand van Tulleken, Hala El-Shafie help more dieters tackle weight-loss regimes. They begin by meeting Stefanie and Jade from Harrow who have just 10 days to slim down before the launch of their clothing label. Jade tests a low-fat diet, while sugar addict Stefanie must survive on foods that don't contain the sweet stuff. Later, the duo challenge fast-food fan Matt from Redditch to test a 'warrior' diet, which involves eating like a Roman soldier. And finally Rob from the Wirral tries a 'Sleeping Beauty' regime, in the hope that sleeping more will help his body optimise the hormones that control his metabolism and appetite. But will there be a happy ever after as far as his diet is concerned?

WEDNESDAY
No Offence
Channel 4, 9pm
The second series of Paul Abbott's Manchester-set police comedy-drama continues. As no-nonsense DI Viv Deering (Joanna Scanlan) and impulsive DC Dinah Kowalska (Elaine Cassidy) search for the people who are helping local gang the Attahs, including its fearsome leader Norah (Rakie Ayola), in child exploitation, they uncover tensions within the family that could lead to a breakthrough in the case. However, when the team is called to an armed robbery at a pub in a converted bank, it soon escalates into a life-threatening hostage situation. Elsewhere, PC Jonah Mitchell (Ste Johnson) pursues a man posing as a paramedic with a knack of slipping through legal loopholes.

Unforgotten, Thursday, ITV, 9pm

THURSDAY
Spy in the Wild
BBC1, 8pm
Undercover cameras help to explore the world of animal intelligence, ingenuity and creativity in their hunting, protection and health. Spy Orang-utan meets her real-life counterparts in Borneo to capture how, living close to local people, they have gained unexpected skills in sawing wood and washing with soap, while Spy Termite catches one of the world's cleverest animal tricksters, the drongo, as he tries to outwit a group of meerkats in the battle for food.

Unforgotten
ITV, 9pm
Further investigations into David Walker's life suggest he was a troubled man with a number of issues. Marion has a prickly chat with Cassie about her past and the inquiry reveals her close relationship with an IRA activist. As the police investigation encroaches on their life, Sara and Colin open up to their partners with secrets about their past. Whodunit, starring Nicola Walker.

FRIDAY
President Trump: The Inauguration
BBC1, 4pm
There's already been a lot of speculation about Donald Trump's inauguration, most of it concerning which big names had allegedly turned down the opportunity to perform. But no doubt there will still be plenty of pomp and circumstance as Trump is sworn in as the 45th President of the United States. As befits such a historical occasion, the ceremony is being covered by both the BBC and ITV, live from Washington, DC. As well as bringing us the Oath of Office, there will also be analysis from the channels' assorted experts, who will no doubt be paying particularly close attention to Trump's inaugural address for further clues about his vision for America and the direction of his presidency.

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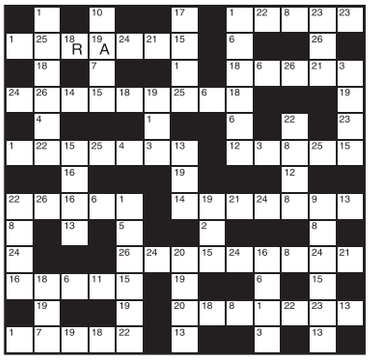
Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



1	14
2	15
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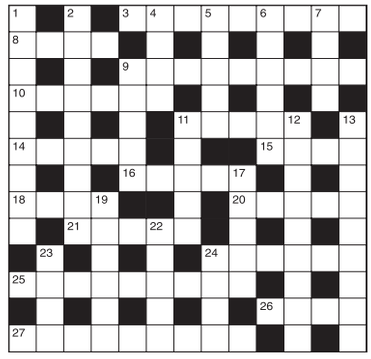
LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
N	T	V	H	A	W	K	C	R	X	U	E	O
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
S	D	Z	Q	J	L	M	I	F	P	B	Y	G

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.



Cryptic Clues:

Across

3. Foreign food - make the GP eat this! (9)
8. Proper ones appear in the real estate market (4)
9. Governs, i.e., as a ruler (9)
10. This will smooth out the wave (6)
11. It's mounted when differently set by the editor (5)
14. The yarn in the novel is legendary (5)
15. Give heed to a brief message (4)
16. Refer to another court to pardon (5)
18. The boy to assume an attitude of prayer, we hear (4)
20. Splits associated with tenanted houses (5)
21. One in a strange sect makes a quotation (5)
24. Maid to spoil a Scotsman! (6)
25. One in unspoilt surroundings, like a bachelor (9)
26. Avoid a colloquial word of command (4)
27. The stage property is a toy (9)

Down

1. To disturb the fish is alarming (9)
2. True to life, but it is clear there's change (9)
4. Inferior alternative to the Post Office (4)
5. One who is entertained arrived at the right conclusion, one hears (5)
6. One by one (6)
7. Closely follows trite quotations (4)
9. One who tacks together a waste disposal unit (5)
11. Distress call about mother returning to Greek island (5)
12. Thorough antonym of up left! (9)
13. Finding a logical cause, as one is upset in the arena (9)
17. Walk on the imprint of a tyre (5)
19. Illuminated one undefined prayer of supplication (6)
22. There's no start to famine - this produces food (5)
23. In the Mediterranean I loved the colour (4)
24. The average man who's tight-fisted is (4)

Quick Clues:

Across

3. Pen-name (9)
8. Detail (4)
9. In utter poverty (9)
10. Diminish (6)
11. Maxim (5)
14. Foster (5)
15. Authentic (4)
16. Dance (5)
18. Retailed (4)
20. Well (5)
21. Give up (5)
24. Drive (6)
25. Harmonize (9)
26. Daybreak (4)
27. Dispute (9)

Down

1. Fiddler (9)
2. Unhurried (9)
4. Observed (4)
5. Unfasten (5)
6. Start (6)
7. Abominable snowman (4)
9. Postpone (5)
11. Shy (5)
12. Celebrating victory (9)
13. Deadly (9)
17. Burning (5)
19. Repudiate (6)
22. Regional (5)
23. Equipment (4)
24. Plot (4)

Sudoku

5		9		6				3
4	2			3	1			
			4			9	6	
		5			3			9
	8	7				4		1
3			8			7	5	
	5	3			2			
				4			1	5
1		4				6		7

Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

2	1	8	5	4	7	3	9	6
5	9	6	2	1	3	4	8	7
4	3	7	6	8	9	1	5	2
9	6	2	8	5	1	7	3	4
8	7	5	3	2	4	9	6	1
1	4	3	7	9	6	8	2	5
3	5	4	9	7	2	6	1	8
6	8	1	4	3	5	2	7	9
7	2	9	1	6	8	5	4	3

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS: CRYPTIC - Across: 1 Away; 3 Trophies; 8 Vert; 9 Imparted; 11 Consequences; 13 Treaty; 14 Salami; 17 Reinvestment; 20 Latitude; 21 Dock; 22 Believer; 23 Sets. Down: 1 Advocate; 2 Arrange; 4 Rumpus; 5 Plain facts; 6 In the; 7 Side; 10 Getting the; 12 Mistakes; 15 Anemone; 16 Needle; 18 Extol; 19 Club. QUICK - Across: 1 Pull; 3 Badinage; 8 Rich; 9 Protrude; 11 Affectionate; 13 Career; 14 Divide; 17 Impertinence; 20 Take away; 21 Abed; 22 Horseman; 23 Bear. Down: 1 Parlance; 2 Lucifer; 4 Afraid; 5 Intentions; 6 Adult; 7 Eden; 10 Accelerate; 12 Defender; 15 Ignoble; 16 Strata; 18 Maker; 19 Itch.

Thinking space

Quiz

1. What does the M stand for in JMW Turner?
2. What do we call a quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation?
3. Which actor's first names are John Uhler III?
4. Which plant has bird's-foot and hop varieties?
5. By which king was the inch defined in statute?
6. In which year was Greenpeace founded?
7. To which region was Cain exiled after he had killed Abel?
8. In which country are the Plains of Abraham?
9. Which city lies on the north side of the Firth of Tay?
10. To which flower family does vanilla belong?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Pig; 2 David Blunkett; 3 Imperial War Museum; 4 W C Fields; 5 North Atlantic; 6 Dandelion; 7 God Save the Queen; 8 Kevin Keegan; 9 Phil Spector; 10 Ink blots.

Niner: COUNTRIES

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

18223654 gives a jewel,
24859 gives a second jewel,
169678 gives a crystalline compound.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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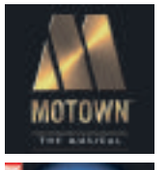

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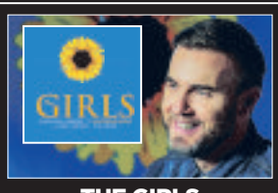
SAVOY THEATRE



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An angel overlooks Lake Malaren, Sormland

Thepicturesque town of Mariefred

Dawn over Lake Malaren in Mariefred, Sormland

Maria Printz, owner of the Printz bakery in Stallarholmen

How Sweden harnesses delight of simple but joyous traditions

Sarah Marshall reports

WINNING a Nobel Prize could arguably be the best Christmas present of all. But not for lyricist Bob Dylan, one of this year's best-known laureates.

"He won't even be coming to the ceremony," my taxi driver complains as we whirl through snow-dusted cobbled streets below Stockholm's City Hall. He has other plans, apparently."

Three days after the grand December 10 banquet, honoured guests are woken from their rooms at the prestigious Grand Hotel by singing angels carrying candles, part of the St Lucia tradition. It's fair to say Mr Tambourine Man won't be in their repertoire. . . No matter; the show will go on.

Swedes honour traditions with clockwork precision, something I discover on a weekend winter break to their capital city and its surrounding areas. Fleeing the commercialised circus of high-street chaos, I surface in a world of clean, crisp sophistication, where flashing rainbow lights and tacky tinsel are superseded by simple lingonberry wreaths and the flickering gold flames of advent candles.

It's Christmas time, and the markets have sprung up in the city. One of the most atmospheric is held at Hovstallet, the Royal Stable. Stooping in a loose-fitting tartan blazer, equerry Lars shows me the king's private property, which is open for public tours throughout the year.

"This is Stockholm's best kept secret," he whispers, as we weave through ornate royal carriages and past pedigree horses nuzzling into their mangers, entering a room filled with 38 gleaming harnesses.

"Every year, two are flown by hand luggage to your Buckingham Palace, where skilled craftsmen make repairs," Lars tells me. "We give the horses these jingle bells to wear in winter so they can be heard by traffic when the sound of their hooves is deadened by snow."

Inventive

As the morning wears on, shoppers pour into the sky-lit Riding Hall and a labyrinth of stables, where stalls sell national favourites such as smoked fish, marzipan pigs and a parade of inventive condiments.

Sheepskin rugs and cushions spiral with tight silky curls, and toy elves peer from an unkempt tangle of felt and wool. Ice scrapers with knitted handles are my novelty gift find of the day. Most people are gathering goods for their Christmas table. But to discover an even greater selection of produce, I head to the bread basket region of Sormland, a 45-minute journey from Stockholm by train. Residents of Stallarholmen are hosting a Charles Dickens-themed market, with carol singers gathered around a log fire and aromas of roast pork.

Gregarious baker Maria Printz is doing a roaring trade in sticky cinnamon buns and saffron cakes, traditionally eaten at this time of year.

Many of the local meats, cheeses and smoked fish make their way into a traditional julbord (a Swedish smorgasbord) served at Gripsholms Vardshus, a cosy inn located in nearby Mariefred. Vodka-infused salmon, herring pickled with fennel, and a salty roast gammon are all highlights.

I learn more about the origins of this former Viking settlement at the Callanderska Garden folklore centre, a 274-year-old red clapperboard house.

theticket

Discounts on offer to first time buyers

First time buyers in the UK will be able to buy a new starter home at a discount of at least 20 per cent if they are aged between 23 and 40, the housing minister has confirmed.

Gavin Barwell has announced that the first of thousands of new Starter Homes will be built on brownfield sites across the country this year.

"Thousands of new homes backed with financial support will help more first time buyers into home ownership. They will be built exclusively for first time buyers between 23 and 40 years old at a discount of at least 20 per cent below market value," he said.

He explained that the first wave of 30 local authority partnerships, selected on the basis of their potential for early delivery, will spearhead the new schemes using the Government's £1.2 billion Starter Homes Land Fund which supports the development of starter homes on sites across England.

He pointed out that the new developments will also support the wider growth and regeneration of local areas, including some town centre sites and construction on the first homes will begin later this year along with sites supported by the Homes and Communities Agency.

"This Government is committed to building Starter Homes to help young first time buyers get on the housing ladder. This first wave of partnerships shows the strong local interest to build thousands of Starter Homes on hundreds of brownfield sites in the coming years. One in three councils has expressed an interest to work with us so far," Barwell added.

However, some in the industry are sceptical as to how fast these kind if initiatives will be put in place. According to Mark Hayward, managing director of the National Association of Estate Agents (NAEA), the construction needs to begin swiftly.

"The dream of home ownership is too far out of reach for thousands of aspiring first time buyers and the building of new homes on disused brownfield sites, as well as a 20 per cent discount for buyers aged 23 to 40 will go some way to bridging this gap," he said.

"However, we must not throw caution to the wind. The Government has made promise after promise and pledge after pledge to help first time buyers get on to the housing ladder, but until we see these houses built we won't hold our breath," he added.

The Starter Homes Land Fund was set up to prepare suitable land for quality starter home developments which can be built on by developers or through accelerated construction by 2020.

In addition, the Homes and Communities Agency has also issued a call seeking expressions of interest from local authorities who are interested in using their land to deliver homes at pace through the £1.7 billion accelerated construction recently announced. This will see up to 15,000 homes started on surplus public sector land this Parliament.

The Homes and Communities Agency received 79 expressions of interest from 120 local authorities across the country outside London, many involving joint submissions, in response to the Starter Homes land fund prospectus.

The £1.2 billion Starter Home Land Fund was established in April 2016 to support the acquisition, remediation and de-risking of further suitable land for starter home developments.

UK's house price growth ends the year at 4.5%

Annual house price growth in the UK ended 2016 at 4.5%, the same as in 2015, but in London it was below the national average for the first time in eight years.

The latest index data from lender the Nationwide also shows that month on month prices increased by 0.8% taking the price of an average home to £205,898.

Overall the index report says that the housing market was largely stable in 2016 but there were signs that London's significant period of outperformance may be drawing to a close.

For the first year since 2008, annual house price growth in the capital was lower than the UK average, with prices increasing by 3.7% over the year, down from 12.2% in 2015.

According to Robert Gardner, Nationwide's chief economist, the prospects for house prices in 2017 will depend crucially on developments in the wider economy, around which there is a greater degree of uncertainty than usual.

"Like most forecasters, including the Bank of England, we expect the UK economy to slow modestly next year, which is likely to result in less robust labour market conditions and modestly slower house price growth," he said.

"But we continue to think a small gain, around 2%, is more likely than a decline over 2017 as a whole, since low interest rates are expected to help underpin demand while a shortage of homes on the market will continue to provide support for house prices," he added.

Rob Weaver, director of investments at property crowdfunding platform Property Partner, believes that it is good news that prices are still creeping up despite Brexit and the housing market has remained resilient and is stable, particularly when compared to other investments.

"The combination of record low borrowing rates propping up demand and a severe shortage of both housing stock and available homes for sale has meant prices have continued to rise. Predictions for the year ahead are positive although we most probably won't be seeing London house prices over the short term," he pointed out. "Overall, property prices are heading upwards slowly but surely despite uncertain times politically and economically.

"In the long term, the UK housing market will continue to outperform most other investment classes," he added.

Letting agents can 'save you money'

Almost of half of private rented sector landlords use a letting agent because it gives them peace of mind and a quarter communicate with then on a weekly basis, new research has found.

The research from insurance firm Endsleigh also found that agents can help landlords save money, almost £2,000 a year, by minimising void periods.

Overall 41 per cent feel the main benefit of working with an agent is that it provides peace of mind, and 25 per cent will contact their agent at least once a week.

Landlords who feel they could save money by not using a letting agent said that the average amount they were not spending on fees amounted to £159 per month.

Pro-actively

However, comparative analysis of the rental income and void periods for those landlords with, and those without, agents suggested that in fact agents saved their clients an average of £1,910 a year.

Some 76% of respondents reported that their agent helped them pro-actively find tenants, as well as providing other services such as help with legal and financial matters and so contributed to a reduction in overall costs.

But the survey suggests that relationships between letting agents and landlords are not about financial benefits alone.

Among landlords who use an agent some 50% did so because of their local knowledge and more than two in five were attracted by the service provided by their agent as a deciding factor.

According to Will Parker, associate director and chartered surveyor at H&H Land the figure given in the survey for savings is substantial.

He said: "In the past there have been widespread misconceptions amongst landlords about the value for money offered by letting agents."

The survey suggests that in these cases letting agents can in fact save their clients an average of almost £2000, which is certainly a very significant saving and one worth considering.

Stourbridge Chronicle Thursday, January 12, 2017

The benchmark for family motoring

By John Griffiths

Vauxhall's Zafira has always been about flexibilty and a family-friendly character: a car to carry seven people or the amount of cargo that would otherwise require a medium van.

It's no surprise then that this multi-purpose vehicle (MPV) has established itself as a class leader, even though SUV-styled cars are to some extent stealing its thunder along with that of hatchbacks and saloons.

That might seem a bit odd when these SUVs (most of which don't have off-road or even bad weather capability) can't match the Zafira for sheer space and flexibility, but trends come and go in the motor industry like any other. But loyal MPV owners will be pleased to know Vauxhall is not only sticking with the Zafira, it has just launched a new and much improved version.

The latest Zafira Tourer is bigger, tuned to provide a better drive and is kitted out with some of the latest computer, connectivity and safety technology, including the unique to Vauxhall OnStar system which could save your life or get your car back if it's stolen.

List prices range from £18,665 to £29,630 and engines include a 1.4 litre petrol turbo with 140PS, a 1.6 litre, 136PS turbo diesel and a 2.0 litre diesel with 170PS.

The test car was a mid-range at £23,370, in Tech Line and powered by the bigger engine and six-speed manual gearbox. That seems like value for money bearing in mind the high levels of standard equipment, space and practicality compared to many hatchbacks and SUVs in the same price bracket.

While the most popular engine choice is likely to be the small, 1.6 diesel familiar from other Vauxhalls such as the new Astra and the Mokka X, the 2.0 litre diesel is worthy of consideration.

Of course it's quicker (0 to 62mph in 9.1 seconds) but I'm not sure an extra second or so off the traffic lights sprint is all that important in this type of car. The real benefit is the 400Nm of torque, which is all there from just 1,750rpm, which gives the engine tremendous flexibility and refinement.

Both engines are noted for their quiet, smooth operation, too, but the 1.6 will no doubt appeal to those who appreciate extra fuel and tax effiency. The figuresfor the 2.0 are impressive at 57.7mpg and 129g/km while for the 1.6 they are 68.9mpg and 109g/km.

Don't write off the petrol alternative, though. While the capacity is just 1,400cc, remember this engine is turbocharged and so is endowed with a lot more power and torque – 140PS, 200NM and a sprint time of under ten seconds to 62mph. The official fuel economy figure is 42.2mpg and 158g/km. It can also save on your initial outlay, as model for model it's cheaper to buy than the diesel options.

The interior is still one of the most flexible in the market, with each of the five second and third row seats capable of being folded flat with just one hand. Those in the second row slide forward in the same flowing movement, allowing easier access to the third row.

With seven passengers on board, cargo space is limited but with five adults on board it's an impressive 710 litres, rising to a van-like 1,880 litres. You can, of course, fold down one, two, three four or five seats to juggle between passengers and cargo which makes it ideal for business use and the family.

The front architecture is new, too, reflecting the 'face' of the new Astra and underneath there is a new suspension system front and rear.

VAUXHALL ZAFIRA, FROM £18,665

The front architecture of the latest Vauxhall Zafira is now, reflecting the 'face' of the new Astra

The dash is dominated bv the colour touchscreen controller which is multifunctional, controlling features such as navigation, audio and connectivity.

The lounge style seating includes a centre armrest with a variety of storage solutions, and electronic climate control, steering wheel mounted remote controls, privacy rear windows, cruise control, speed limter, electric windows and automatic headlights and wipers are standard, too.

Multiple airbags, ABS and an electronic stability system are part of the safety package.

The test car was also fitted with OnStar, the Vauxhall system which allows you to talk to an adviser at the company's Luton headquarters at the touch of a button. They can, using telematics, advise on the condition of the car such as oil levels or tyre pressures, or download a route into the car's navigation system. It can even help you find a 'lost' car by switching on the lights or sounding the horn. But more seriously, if your car is stolen it can track it and disable the ignition until the police arrive.

There's also an 'SOS' which, if pressed, can allow the operator to send the emergency services to your location.

Such technology, combined with space, practicality and comfort, makes the new Zafira Tourer the benchmark for family motoring.

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VAUXHALL

Mid-life makeover does the business

By Laura Thomson

Ford launched its popular Kuga back in 2008 and it saw success in the small SUV market.

The second-generation Kuga made its debut in 2013, The model has now been given a mid-life makeover, with exciting new technologies and styling.

We tested the ST-Line Kuga, which costs £29,554 on the road. This model sits second highest on the spec list, below the luxury Vignale trim. These trims are both available for the first time on the new Kuga.

With a full bodystyling kit and sports suspension, the ST-Line is aimed at drivers wanting a sportier feel from their Kuga. Coupled with the 2.0-litre, 178bhp TDCi engine, this is as close a performance-orientated SUV as Ford gets.

The Kuga's looks are bold and sporty, but it lacks the rugged appeal of other SUVs in its class, such as the Jeep Renegade.

Immediately noticeable is the new, trapezoid grille, which is flanked by raked and intricate LED headlights and stylish new fog lights. Redesigned alloy rims also feature across the range, while two new colour options of Guard Grey and Copper Pulse are offered.

The ST-Line benefits from 18-inch dark alloy wheels and a full body styling kit, which includes a lower centre silver skid plate and black-finish roof rails, headlight bezels, side wind vents and door frame mouldings.

In the cabin, convenience is key, with an electronic parking brake replacing the previous, manual lever, and simplified, easily distinguishable buttons and switches introduced.

There's plenty of space in the rear

This convenience theme is seen elsewhere on the car, with a hands-free liftgate now coming as standard.

Heated ST-Line sports seats offer multi-way adjustability, as does the steering wheel.

In the Kuga, rear passengers are afforded comfortable, spacious seats, with more than adequate head, leg and hip room. The front, meanwhile, is neither uncomfortable nor cramped, and theaforementioned redesigned switches go a long way to simplify the dash.

For what the ST-Line Kuga has gained in performance and style, though, it has lost in boot space, with its rear luggage compartment usurped by other models in its class. At 485 litres with the seats up, it increases to 1603 litres with the rear seats folded down – which is extremely easy to do, even with one hand.

A Thatcham category 1 alarm comes as standard on all models, as does Ford's Intelligent Protection System and a selection of airbags in the front and rear.

We tested the Kuga in the extremes of the Arctic Circle, and while not its usual stomping ground, the car managed surprisingly well. Ice, both visible and black, proved no issue for Ford's intuitive All-Wheel Drive system, which sent varying torque to each wheel to correct any skids. ABS kicked in under heavy braking on the slippery stuff, and succeeded in bringing the vehicle to a safe, controlled stop on more than one occasion.

The sports suspension of the ST-Line gives the car a firm yet agile feel, and as such it dealt well with body roll.

At motorway speeds, the Kuga was comfortable and the steering remained well weighted. Road and wind noise is present, because of the bulky front end. However, it is not loud enough to prove irritating.

Through its slick manual gearbox, the Kuga can accelerate to 60mph in nine seconds, with a top speed of 126mph. Throughout the rev range, the 178bhp guise boasts plentiful power, thanks to the 400Nm of torque.

Ford's new SYNC3 system is the upgrade the brand is shouting about, and it's easy to see why. Housed on an aesthetically appealing centre console, the system is more responsive than the previous '2' guise, and the eight-inch screen boasts more clarity, too. SYNC3 is compatible with both Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, allowing extra connectivity to the car. The driver can control and adjust every aspect of the SYNC3 media system via voice commands.

As standard, the ST-Line Kuga features Ford's Active Park Assist and Park-Out Assist. As their names suggest, these two systems help the driver to both enter and leave a tight parking space. The former is designed to steer the vehicle into tight parallel or perpendicular spaces that are only 20 per cent longer or wider than the car. At the touch of a button, the car assumes the steering, leaving the driver to operate the accelerator, brakes and gears. The latter only works with parallel spots and steers, while the driver again keeps control of the accelerator, brake and gears.

Ford's adaptive front lighting signature has made a debut on the Kuga, monitoring and adjusting the vehicle's beam according to a number of conditions, including the vehicle's speed, steering angle and distance from a vehicle in front. A weather-dependent lighting mode also features, automatically adjusting the beam to help the driver spot roadside hazards in heavy rain.

The Kuga is a comfortable small SUV with a host of handy updates. The sporty ST-Line is impressive, with generous standard equipment, but expensive, at £29,554. If you want a capable all-rounder, you will find one in the cheaper Titanium, or even Zetec-trim.

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There is a new trapezoid grille, flanked by raked and intricate LED headlights

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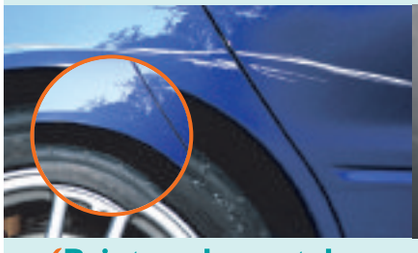

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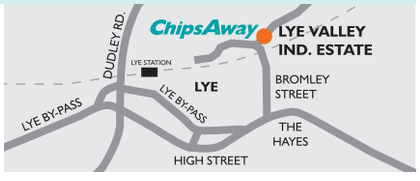

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Scout has a distinctive off-road look and innovative all-wheel drive

All-rounder gets new technology

The comprehensive revision of the Škoda Octavia family continues. Now, after the hatchback, estate and the fastest model variant – the Škoda Octavia vRS, comes the most versatile member of the family with innovations in technology and equipment.

The upgraded Škoda Octavia Scout launches with two engine variants and state-of-the-art all-wheel-drive technology with electronically controlled, hydraulic multi-plate clutch. With a ground clearance that has been increased by 30 mm in comparison to the Škoda Octavia estate, the compact five-door also masters rough terrain. Beyond that, it impresses with good climbing capability, a high towing capacity and numerous 'Simply Clever' features from Škoda.

The robust all-rounder impresses with a distinctive off-road look, innovative all-wheel drive, the best driving characteristics and increased versatility both on and off the road. The comprehensively reworked Scout bears the same front as the newest generation of Škoda Octavias and thereby underlines the family resemblance: it features a more prominent bonnet, the new front end with wide radiator grille and additional headlights with a crystalline look, full-LED headlights with adaptive front headlights. Also the modified fog lights and tail lights are equipped with LED technology. Its independent character is recognisable by silver-coloured underbody protection at the front and the rear. The Rough-Road package is also part of standard equipment and features covering for the undercarriage , brake and fuel lines.

The Scout has good boot capacity

The Scout impresses with its interior space, which for the compact car segment is particularly generous, good body layout, distinct versatility, high level of functionality and great driving characteristics. Besides the increased ground clearance, the all-wheel drive with electronically controlled, hydraulic multi-plate clutch, which comes as standard, also ensures even greater driving pleasure off the road. When driving on rough terrain the advantages of the ramp angles, which have been increased to 16.6 degrees at the front and 14.5 degrees at the rear, become apparent.

Both the front and rear axle of the car are fitted with an electronic differential lock (EDL) as standard. EDL allows the car to pull away smoothly on difficult surfaces, transmitting drive to both the front and rear axles.

For safer and easier descents on rough terrain the off-road function is available for the Scout. When in use the speed of the vehicle is consistently maintained without the driver needing to do anything. Modern engine management, which increases safety during descents using braking, makes life easier.

The 'Simply Clever' features include a heated steering wheel and seats with the Thermo-Flux function which, from time to time, increases the air and moisture permeability and provides considerably more riding comfort in different climatic conditions – the upgraded Scout is therefore an adventurer in the truest sense. The boot has a capacity of 610 to 1740 litres and thanks to its width of 1010 mm, is also perfectly suited to transporting bulky loads without any problems. Numerous storage solutions in the interior increase practicality. Towing capacity is up to two tonnes, depending on the engine.

The reworked adventurer is available from market launch with two different four-cylinder engine variants:

2.0 TDI: 110 kW (150 PS), top speed 129 mph, 0 – 62 mph in 9.1 seconds, combined consumption 56.5 mpg, CO_2 130 g/km

2.0 TDI: 135 kW (184 PS), top speed 136 mph, 0 – 62 mph in 7.8 seconds, combined consumption 55.4 mpg, CO_2 133 g/km.

The current car is equipped with all the modern infotainment systems of the new Škoda generation. All of the capacitive touch displays feature a glass design. The wide range of driver assistance systems in the Scout sets new standards within its segment. Innovations here include Trailer Assist, Blind Spot Detect and Rear Traffic Alert. The Crew Protect Assist function, which closes windows and the sunroof in the event of an impending accident and tensions the seat belts on the front seats, is connected to the improved Front Assist function.

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AERIAL AND TV SPECIALIST Any TV Repairs, Plasma, LED etc. CCTV cameras supplied & fitted. Any area. Free Estimates. 7 days. Digital aerials, Sky installation. Wall mounts / TV setups. 07850 330251.

specialists at your service

aerials

CLASSIFIEDS DELIVERS RESULTS

"I am very pleased with the response I get from my Classified Advertising Contract"
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For great business results call
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Brought to you by Express & Star

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SATELLITE & CCTV
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Work Guaranteed
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Supplied and Fitted £195
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All areas covered
All quotes beaten!
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Over 35 years experience in the industry
All aspects of building work including: Extensions, loft conversions, roofing, driveways & landscaping.
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A BRILLCLEAN for your Carpets & Suite. OAP discounts. Best Prices. Est., 20yrs. Steve 07496 922324.

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Expert driveways and all garden services. Block paving, patios, tarmacing driveways and driveways extended.
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STEVE JONES ELECTRICAL Rewires/sockets/fuse boards etc. All domestic and commercial work. 07786 858977/01902 846167.

fencing

PORTWAY FENCING
SPECIAL OFFER
6 x 5 Heavy Duty Lap Panels
£12.95 each
Fitting service available or DIY.
0121 531 5250 / 07866 137 656
Mon - Fri 8am - 4.30pm
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83 Portway Rd, W'bury
DELIVERY AVAILABLE
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gardening services

For all your Patio's, Turfing, Decking, treework and Root grinding...
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Call us on: 01384 273586 or 07947 879403 or visit www.prestwoodfencing.co.uk for more details

gas fitting

READERS ARE ADVISED
To check that anyone carrying out any Gas work is Gas Safe Registered.
It is an offence under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 to carry out gas work in the UK without being on the Gas Safe Register.

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DJS plastering, painting, tiling, decorating, Insur work 20 yrs exp. OAP discounts - Call Dean. 01902 670 482 / 07772315165

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A ABSOLUTE BEST cash price paid for house clearances and bereavements. Also removals undertaken. 07852 172641 / 07710 360327

ABSOLUTELY ANYTHING CLEARED
FULL OR PART GARAGES / SHEDS, RUBBISH REMOVED
WASTE LICENCE
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GRANITE PAVING & LANDSCAPING
Block paving, Slabbing, Tarmacadam, Gravel, Walls, Steps, Rendering etc.
FREE ESTIMATES: 0800 959 6152 or 07521 907653.

painters / decorators

A PROFESSIONAL DECORATING service by RC Decorating. Free competitive quotes: 07773 025880.

LOVE 2 WALLPAPER
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Attention to detail, competitive prices.
For the Perfect Finish with minimum hassle.
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M & S PLASTERING & BUILDING Services. Home/Garden Improvements.Mark or Sara: 07741 770897

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removals

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Careful Firm
Full or Part loads
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CALL DEAN NOW: For all your Removal needs. 07429 453209/ 01902 830870 / 01384 940260.

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CALL PETE - MAN WITH A VAN, Removals, clearances, large/small. 01902 741546, 07899 635852.

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12 years experience.
SINGLE ITEMS TO FULL LOADS.
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We move anything.
Professional service,
45 years' experience,
DFS approved and we take the stress away.
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skip hire

BIG JOHN MOVES RUBBISH! No Skips, we load, fast friendly service, 25 Lister Rd, Dudley DY2 8JR, Est 35 years, 01384 232359.

SELL IT FAST SELL IT LOCAL
01902 317878
ClassifiedAds

4 Pets & Animals

equestrian corner

ALL READERS are advised to check if Horses have the required Passport information.

guns & dogs

NOTICE TO ADVERTISERS

Advertisers must ensure that they meet all necessary legal requirements for owning and using guns.

pets corner

GREYHOUNDS MAKE WONDERFUL PETS
All neutered, innoculated and microchipped.
Call 01922 412212 or www.rgtwolverhampton.co.uk
RGT Wolverhampton
@RGTWolves

NOTICE TO READERS
Please be aware that when purchasing a puppy there are some simple guidelines you can follow to ensure that you are not purchasing from a Puppy Farmer:

1. Try to ensure you visit the puppy whilst it is still with it's Mother.
2. Do not arrange to collect a puppy from any other location than that of the breeder.
3. Ensure that you are given any KC documentation, if pedigree.

Whilst Midland News Association publications take great care to avoid publication of advertisements from Puppy Farmers we cannot accept any liability should readers purchase from this kind of establishment.

SALLY Affectionate 12 year old cat looking for a new home, after owner passed away before Christmas, suit older persons. 07847 360784.

5 Business & Farming

business opportunities

READERS are recommended to take appropriate professional advice before entering any obligations.

6 Property

accommodation to let

NOTICE TO READERS It is an offence under the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953, for an Agency to charge a fee simply for the registration of your requirements and/or supplying particulars of premises to let.

BRIERLEY HILL 2 bed house, DG, GCH, carpeted, alarmed, no pets. 01562 885213 / 07784 698895.

SELF CONTAINED studio flat, Gornal, own amenities, suit single mature person. 01384 821363.

overseas property

NOTICE TO READERS
Readers are advised to seek independent legal advice before entering into any financial commitments.

properties wanted

A LOCAL BUYER pays full market value and more for your property. Call Rick 07729 297901

WE PAY 100% of purchase price EVERY TIME!

BLACK COUNTRY HOMES

Sell your HOUSE - SIMPLE
You agree the price, we buy the house.
- NO AGENTS FEES
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- ANY HOUSE, ANY CONDITION

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- No Fees
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- Guaranteed Offer
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We can buy your house in 2 days
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01902 628047 Lines open 24 hours a day 7 days a week subject to terms

Need to sell your home fast?
We can help you make a fresh start
With solutions to suit ...
you can clear your debts and make a fresh start

Purchase Agreed Within 7 DAYS
ALL CIRCUMSTANCES CONSIDERED
COMPLETE ON DATE TO SUIT
FREE VALUATION AND LEGALS
FREE FRIENDLY ADVICE
LOCAL COMPANY

MARION | PROPERTY SOLUTIONS
WHY NOT CALL US TODAY
for an informal, friendly and confidential chat?
*Terms and Conditions apply
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Sell today, sign today, complete when u wish
£££ RENT BACK OPTIONS £££
Houses / Land Required
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Walsall & Cannock area: Call 01922 432049
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expressandstar.co.uk
and become one of hundreds of customers who regularly receive exclusive special offers & discounts.

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7 Jobs

full time - general

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Real opportunities for you
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REAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOU

Express & Star

FIXED PRICE RECRUITMENT PACKAGE

FILL YOUR NEXT VACANCY WITH OUR BRONZE FIXED PRICE RECRUITMENT PACKAGE

Bronze package includes:
- 5cm x 2 column advert in Express & Star (Thursday)
- 5cm x 2 column advert in Chronicle of your choice
- Two week listing on jobs.expressandstar.com
- 5 line advert to appear in Express & Star Classified jobs for 5 nights
- We will run the lineage and online advert on a daily basis until you fill the vacancy

Package Price £399*

JANUARY SPECIAL OFFER
Book a January recruitment package and get a second package at **half price** within 6 months

Contact **Tracey Thompson** on **01902 319645**
or email **tracey.thompson@expressandstar.co.uk**

*All prices are subject to VAT

BRIDGES
LOTTERY FUNDED

New Year, New You!
Are you unemployed and 25 or over?
Want to become self-employed in 2017 but not sure how?
Call Amanda at Access to Business today for free advice, support and workshops on 01902 572 397
Email: Amanda@access2business.co.uk
This project is supported by The European Social Fund and the Big Lottery Fund

Bodywork Solutions
Bodywork Solutions ..giving Bodybuilding a new name.
Bodywork Solutions Ltd have opened a new bodybuilding facility in Stourbridge and have a number of vacancies:
- QUALIFIED BODYBUILDERS
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8 Motoring

cars over £1500

FORD FIESTA ZETEC
2005, 56,000 Miles, Silver, Taxed, Fully Serviced, MoT, AirCon, Heated Windscreen, Petrol
£1,500 ono
07943388142

PRESTIGE

MERCEDES SL350 AUTOMATIC CONVERTIBLE
54 reg, 74,000 miles, FSH, Obsidian Black, with cream leather, keyless go, power hood, panoramic glass roof, anti roll bar wind deflector, alloys, sat nav, Xenon lights, 2 keys.
Absolutely pristine.
£9,999.
07836 204450 or 07545 601552.

RENAULT CLIO DYNAMIQUE
2011, 39,000 miles, electric windows, air con, cruise control, pas, Navigation System.
Very good condition.
£2,999.
07879 403302.

RENAULT GRAND SCENIC
2010, 51k, bronze, abs, electric windows/mirrors, air bag, air con, alarm, long MoT, central locking, cruise control, pas, diesel, alloys, CD, Sat Nav.
£4,750 ono.
07841 017382.

SORRY TO SELL IT

ROVER 75 2.0 DIESEL
2002, 11 months MoT, 2 owners from new with fsh, low guaranteed mileage for year, 18in MG alloys with four new tyres plus four original Rover alloys with good tyres, very nice and well looked after vehicle, regrettable sale due to unexpected Christmas present.
£1,550.
07773 354042.

1ST TO SEE WILL BUY

TOYOTA YARIS 1.0VVTi
57 reg., 3-dr, silver, Lady owner, FSH, 47,000 miles, immaculate.
£2,150
07962 268640.

EXCELLENT CONDITION

VW LUPO
Grey black, September 2004, 14,400 miles, MoT until to March, one lady owner, never raced or rallied, always garaged, religiously serviced annually by main dealer, spotless as really careful.
Best offer over
£1,600 secures.
07952 516831 (J3 M54)

cars under £1500

ADVERTISERS ARE REMINDED
that the Business Advertisements (Disclosure) Order of 1977 requires that advertisements must clearly differentiate between Private and Trade.

BARGAIN

FORD FOCUS C MAX
1.6 diesel, 55 reg, MoT August, used daily, very clean.
Bargain £500 no offers.
07961 669911.

BARGAIN

NISSAN ALMERA TINO HURRICANE MPV
02 reg., MoT May 2, 2017, 92,000 miles, leather seats, CD player, towbar, clean inside and out.
£500 ono
07948 031307.

NISSAN MICRA
2005, 97,000 Miles, Blue, abs, electric windows, air bag, fsh, MoT, central locking, pas, Stereo, CD
£650 ono
07775 337042

★★★

PEUGEOT 307 1.4
Petrol, 104+ miles, 05, MoT February 2017, four new tyres, very good condition inside and out, lady owner, very good runner and reliable
£550 o.n.o.
07515 770277.

EXCELLENT CONDITION

RENAULT CLIO
1.2CC
04 reg, full MoT 5dr, CD player, alloy wheels, sunroof, low miles, excellent condition.
£995.
07826 460800.

MUST BE SEEN

RENAULT LAGUNA ALIZE
2000, 5-dr hatchback, sun roof, electric windows, CD player, new tyres, tow bar, very reliable Family / work car,
MoT April 2017.
£750.
01746 764455. 07772 836066.

VAUXHALL ASTRA CLUB CDTi
5Dr hatchback, 2005, black, diesel, 1686cc, MoT end of January 2017, 140,000 miles, good condition.
£700 o.n.o.
07783 039980
or
07729 526733

classic cars

WANTED, CLASSIC Cars. Private cash buyer.Instant cash settlement. Any age. Any condition. 01630 652993 or 07773 462797.

driving tuition

Homer's
10 Hours £125! Four Hours £40!
2 Hours £20! All Areas Covered
ADI/PDI REQUIRED. Gift vouchers available for £10
07432 458100 / 01562 870050
01384 234954 / 0121 5640090
01902 580065 www.homersdrivingschool.co.uk

scrap vehicles

OUR ADVERTISERS are reminded that it is an offence under the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 to buy scrap cars/metal for cash.

A BETTER PRICE
for scrap or damaged cars and commercials. Spares for sale.
NINE LOCKS VEHICLE DISMANTLERS LTD
Brierley Hill 01384 76566 or 70553. Evenings 75397. DY5 3JZ.

vehicles wanted

alan reed cars
Used cars wanted for cash
Top prices paid. HP settled.
Buyer could call.
01562 711083 / 07831 245313

CROWN MOTORS guarantee best price for your unwanted cars/vans. 07903 549649, buyer will call.

spares & accessories

clutches / brakes / gearboxes

A CLUTCH CHANGE MOBILE
For Example:
Citroen C1, C2, C3
Hyundai 110, Toyota Yaris
Clios & Micras
Ring for quotes on others!
30 yrs experience
ALL AREAS COVERED
Call Bob
01384 251328
07972 169554
anytime

servicing

HAVING CAR PROBLEMS Leave your car in good hands, come to us! **Call BCR Service 01384 259016**

9 Local Information

public & legal notices

LEGAL / PUBLIC NOTICES
For convenience you may fax any advertising requirements to
Marie Hogg on 01902 713146
or email marie.hogg@expressandstar.co.uk
(remember to include a name/contact number for confirmation of receipt)

10 Personals

personal

DIVORCED DAD 57
Would like to meet single, divorced Lady 45-60, for days / nights in or out.
Must be caring, affectionate and looking for a long term relationship.
This is a genuine ad so please only interested Ladies should write.
Box Number P20665,
Express and Star,
Queen Street,
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

GENT, YOUNG 73
Fit, solvent, own house, in to antiques, no car due to eyesight problem, seeks good looking lady, Dudley or surrounding areas.
Box Number P20662 ,
Express and Star,
Queen Street,
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

GENUINE ATTRACTIVE SLIM MAN 53
GSOH, car owner, would like to meet genuine lady 40-58 for evenings, days out and friendship.
Box Number P20663 ,
Express and Star,
Queen Street,
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

MALE, 61
Very sincere, loving and easy going WLTM someone similar.
Box Number P20666 ,
Express and Star,
Queen Street,
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

MR MAGIC
I want you to know I love you so much.
There could never, ever, be another one like you.
Love you forever and a day.
Mrs Magic.
XXXXXX

general

HAVE YOU CHECKED your advertisement today? We would respectfully remind advertisers that it is their responsibility to inform the publishers of any mistakes or inaccuracies on the first day of publication.

SELLING YOUR CAR?
We have a package to suit every budget.
Packages start from as little as
£21.00 for 6 nights
Plus
6 nights free if you do not sell.
CALL
01902 317878

Express & Star DATING

YOUR regional dating service, run by the dating experts who have been established since 1990. ***REAL people in YOUR region***

Try it.. You'll love it!

Dates in ***YOUR*** region

Here's how to use your dating service ...

To ***Place*** your advert call: **0844 381 5936** follow the simple instructions. You will also get ***£10 SMS CHAT CREDIT***

To ***Place*** your ad by text: Simply text **REG** followed by your first name, date of birth, area and your advert (max 155 characters) and send t: **80098** ***FREE*** Standard Network rates apply.

YOU can now ***Date ONLINE*** or via your mobile just visit: **http://dating.expressandstar.com**

To ***Reply*** to members call: **0906 500 3955** calls cost £1.55 per min plus your phone company's access charge.

Have the adverts 6-digit box no written down and do ***key-it-in promptly*** when asked. Don't forget to leave contact details for replies.

To ***Reply*** by text: ***Text...*** **REPLY26** (leave space) box number (leave space) and then enter your message & send to **80098** eg: **REPLY26** 123456 **hi get in touch...** then send to **80098** Successfully received messages cost £1.50 per SMS received (Max 160 characters). You must exchange 7 messages each before you can swap contact details. Messages may be moderated for your safety and security.

Been left a message? ***Pickup*** your replies on: **0906 500 3957** calls cost £1.55 per min plus your phone company's access charge.

THE biggest UK on-line database of 17 million UK REAL users waiting to meet ***you.. visit..*** **http://dating.expressandstar.com**

Single Women

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.55 per minute plus your phone company's access charge. Texts cost £1.50 per message received.

JAN 41, fed up of sitting at home every weekend watching TV alone. Feel the same and looking for love? please contact me. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425497**

KATIE 35yrs, slender well educated brunette seeks no strings mutual pleasure with gent 40+ Must be discreet, married or single. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3003 Box 419673**

STACY 28yr old gorgeous brunette with buxom figure, intelligent and sensual, WLTM genuine male to get to know for fun dates and more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425457**

JANE, young 41, very broadminded seeks chap any age for discreet no strings fun, any age, no time wasters ACA. **Tel: No: 0906 515 3011 Box: 409715**

SARAH, 41, dizzy blonde, blue eyes, loves to dance seeks affectionate, hunky, fun male to make her laugh and brighten up her day. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425413**

SOPHIA young 40yrs, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, all calls answered. **Tel: 0906 515 3019 Box: 413399**

SUE, 60s lady, calling all gents who seek a mature solvent stylish lady, I can wine and dine you, you will have a nice time, call or text me. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424781**

EMILY, mature well educated lady, blonde and smart and broadminded seeks gent any age for no strings fun. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3023 Box 421375**

YOUNG looking Indian female, 40, enjoys meals in/out, good company and conversation, looking for likeminded male. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425493**

HI Gents, I'm Kelly, a down to earth lady, 35yrs, shapely brunette, seeking someone with GSOH, looks unimportant, any age. ACA, I promise! **Tel: 0906 515 3027 Box 423035**

VIKKI 32yr old active female, confident, fit, loves night outs, looking for similar assertive male. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425453**

NAUGHTY curvy 46yr old lady, outgoing and bubbly with a naughty side and lots of banter, WLTM chap 30+. If you are married even better. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3015 Box 424543**

SUE, attractive genuine lady, own home, loves to spoil a man, give me a call or text. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424673**

SARAH, 39yrs, married, seeking chap for no strings intimate times. Special friendship, mutual respect. Give me a call. **Tel: 0906 515 3031 Box 408291**

AMANDA, slim blonde, 50s seeks discreet gent for special times, mutually beneficial to us both. Call now. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425327**

TAMIKA, mature black beauty, hourglass figure and open minded. Pls call if you are discreet, broad minded and nice. I can travel and accommodate. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3007 Box 422365**

HELEN, mid 50's naughty lady seeks some fun times with gent any age. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424493**

WANTED gent 50-76 for cosy nights in, good times, call or text me, you won't be sorry. I'm attractive and have lots to offer. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425339**

MARY, professional mature lady, loves life, very sociable and fun, seeks gent for good conversation and happy times. All calls and texts answered. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424775**

MELINDA, 52yrs, attractive and broad minded seeking chap any age for some fun. Couples also. **Text only Mailbox: 4131946**

CAROL petite brunette, 38yrs, romantic, affectionate, outgoing, seeks similar sensual male for nice times together. Any age/looks. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425395**

JOSIE, sexy black lady, 52yrs seeks adult times with concerning gent, any age, discreet clean, womanly figure. **Text only Mailbox: 4028592**

LADY, looking for a mature, caring, loving gentleman, 55-70, to enjoy the finer things of life with and to be my best friend. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425309**

ANNABELLE, sophisticated 28yrs hoping to meet older gent for adult fun, discreet, sincere, genuine advertiser. **Text only Mailbox: 4157105**

JEAN, mature lady, genuine with many hobbies, slim, blonde and attractive. WLTM interesting gent with GSOH, must be cheerful, looks unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424675**

KATHERINE, 28, tall, slim, dark, blue eyed female with many interests, OHAC, WLTM interesting male for dates, and more. Single dad welcome. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425287**

TRACY, 41, outgoing sun worshiper, OHAC, employed, looking for her Prince Charming to enjoy romantic holidays and good times together. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425257**

SHARON 36yr old single mum looking for loving guy who will appreciate me and help repair my broken heart. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425283**

SHELLEY slim N/S 40's female who likes the simple things in life so no big gestures required, seeking loyal loving male for hopeful LTR. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425253**

SANDRA, smart, sophisticated lady young looking 60s, genuine and kind seeks gent with GSOH, looks unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424671**

EILEEN mid 60s seeks gent 50s-60s for friendship, possibly much more. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425341**

LINDA, 48yrs attractive brunette seeks gent for laughter, wining dining. Age unimportant. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425337**

LOVING lady, romantic and tactile seeks like minded gent for special times, lets make each other feel special. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425325**

ATTRACTIVE Caribbean lady 59yrs, very jolly and fun seeking gent any age who must love good times. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425323**

ANDREA, 43, slim with long dark hair, blue eyes, loves to dance seeks romantic man to share intimate moments in or out. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425221**

CAROL, mid 50s lady, young at heart, attractive and sexy (so I'm told)! Give me a call if you are a gent with GSOH. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424783**

THELMA, 59, slim, petite and Afro Caribbean, GSOH, trustworthy, honest and very caring, leave me your details if that sounds good to you! **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425195**

THAI female 39, very beautiful, petite and self sufficient, loves cooking and home making, looking for caring, kind man/single dad. Please call me. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425191**

CHRISTINE, 40, attractive slim sporty brunette seeks fit well built male. Call me let's see what the future brings. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425061**

AMANDA, 36, tall, slim, busty brunette seeks man, any age, any area, for discreet daytime fun. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418117**

LOUISE, 29, curvy red haired female, been hurt in the past seeks male to buy her flowers and mend her broken heart. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425041**

LYN, 47, curvy quiet sensitive brunette but with a wild side. It could be exciting to know me! **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425013**

KAREN, 47, an attractive blue eyed redhead, curvy size 16, likes films, football, pubs, reading, seeking likeminded male for nights in/out, hopefully more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425057**

JULIE attractive 35yr old female with a great body, looking for no strings attached evening meets. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425037**

HELLO Gents, I'm a mature attractive interesting lady, with gorgeous eyes. I'm smart, sophisticated, love theatre and films. Give me a call or text me. Looks unimportant, must be kind. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424331**

PROFESSIONAL lady, mid 60s, interests include gardening, theatre, walking, days out and travelling, animal lover, looking for a professional gentleman, kind and caring, intellectual and outgoing, with gosh, for friendship possibly more, in the Stafford area. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424569**

Single Men

SEMI retired business man, early 60s, slim, well travelled, fit, tanned, good looking, solvent and very discreet, wltm female, 35-55, married or single, for daytime fun. Couples also welcome. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425183**

IAN, 5ft8, medium build, OHAC, late 50s, likes most things, holidays, gardening, motorbikes, WLTM similar aged lady, 50-60, with nice personality. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 421345**

I'M Andy, 52, looking for a lady, 50-65, for long term relationship, so text me and lets see what happens. **Text only. Mailbox: 5396692**

MATURE male, 50, medium-build, varied interests, seeks true Christian female, 35-45, who enjoys evenings in and dining out, for friendship or possibly more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419283**

ATTRACTIVE male, 58, seeks adventurous female, 50-70, for close fun. Any status or size. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425535**

GARY, 46, 5ft10, blue eyes, GSOH, likes football, quiet nights in, nights out, cinema, walking, travelling, looking for a likewise woman, 35-50, bubbly and fun loving with a GSOH. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425441**

DAN 46, easy going chap WLTM a lady 40+ for an uncomplicated discreet friendship with on strings fun. Discretion guaranteed. **Text only. Mailbox: 5595608**

WELL made broad male, 5ft 10ins, medium build, looking for some adult fun with lovely sexy lady, possible LTR or friends with benefits. **Text only. Mailbox: 5321154**

MATURE male, 50, medium-build, varied interests, seeks true Christian female, 35-45, who enjoys evenings in and dining out, for friendship or possibly more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419283**

MATURE male, 70s, tall, retired, recovering alcoholic, WLTM someone understanding, maybe in the same situation for friendship and mutual support. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425263**

YOUNG 70 widower, fit, lonely, 5ft 11ins, 11st, likes drives, walks, DIY, meals out, gardening, smoker, looking for lady to spend life with. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424687**

MIKE 49, slim, young looks, seeks female, 35-50 for friendship and going out. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 356651**

YOUNG looking 63 year old male, GSOH, friendly, considerate, attractive, looking for a naughty female, any age/status, for adult fun and friendship. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425243**

IRISH gent, 66, GSOH, n/s, wishes to meet lady, North Birmingham area, for friendship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425269**

JAMES, 59, 5ft11, average build, WLTM a Christian lady, 60-70, for companionship. Hope to hear from you. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425227**

IRISH male, 62, 5ft 9ins, GSOH, independent, seeks genuine female for friendship initially. Birmingham area. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 403623**

MALE 63, widower, Irish, GSOH, tall, independent, seeks special lady. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 409243**

MALE 65, GSOH, seeks female for friendship and companionship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418389**

TOM, 32, slim, attractive, own home, likes to eat out and in, WLTM honest, kind girl for tender, loving care and fun times. No timewasters please. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424929**

JAY, attractive, 6ft2, single father, loves a laugh and a giggle, looking for a lady for evenings out, company and maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424303**

CHRIS, 49yrs honest gent seeks lady 45-55 for socialising, friendship, maybe leading to romance. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425345**

PETER, sincere solvent gent 70s seeks lady to wine dine, foreign travel, all expenses paid. I would love a traveling companion. Genuine advertiser. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425343**

MALCOLM, 60 something gent, own hair and teeth, GSOH, genuine and Kind WLTM sincere lady to wine and dine. Please call. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425335**

PROFESSIONAL gent, 44yrs, tall, attractive and genuine. Seeks genuine feminine lady for genuine romance. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425333**

PIERS, 56yrs, romantic gent WLTM lady to wine, dine, spoil. I'm kind, caring, generous pls call me. Single mums welcome. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425331**

GENUINE gentleman, family minded, kind, generous seeks lady 55-75 for wining, dining and wine and laughter. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425329**

WIDOWER, 60s, honest, trustworthy, GSOH, likes country walks, shows, nights in, restaurants etc, WLTM a partner to share interests. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425157**

LONELY male seeks partner for company and maybe LTR. GSOH and very caring. Copd sufferer but still likes to enjoy life. **Text only. Mailbox: 4310699**

CARING 55yr old male, widower, 6ft 3ins, WLTM lady, 40-55 for fun and laughter, maybe happy ever after. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424677**

DAVE, 54, 5ft10, medium build, easy going, happy, looking for an attractive, loving and caring female, 45-65, for friendship and relationship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 423073**

BIG is beautiful is larger is lovelier, Steve 58, seeking broadminded, adventurous BBW for fun times. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 412031**

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CARING male, 55, N/S, medium build, likes meals out, music, cinema, sports, driving, seeks female, 40-60 for friendship. **Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 239148**

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Wolverhampton & Bilston AC's Psalm Roberts-Nash and Ellis Greatrex

Snooker champion Reanne Evans

Priory Park Boxing Club chairman Paul Gough with Dudley North MP Ian Austin

Sports stars grow from grassroots

SPORTING FEATURE

NICK ELWELL looks at some of the local sports stars who made the headlines in 2016

TEENAGERS Charlotte Breen and Katy Murmanis began the new year with Georgia on their minds.

The talented Tettenhall and Black Country Volleyball Club players were selected to play for England in their European Under-19 clashes with Georgia and Belarus.

Bilbrook Junior FC had cause for celebration in January after landing a £400,000 windfall from the FA, to be used on a new changing pavilion and improved pitches.

In February, Wednesfield Aces became the first cycle speedway club to receive money from Sport England with £6,000 to help fund coaching courses and new equipment. Meanwhile, East Park Wolves cycle speedway club marked their milestone 10th anniversary.

Wolverhampton and Bilston AC duo Ellis Greatrex and Psalm Roberts-Nash, both 16, claimed first and second in the 400m at both the Welsh Under-20 and senior championships.

Crowned

Sandwell's Kimura Shukokai Portway Karate team had 13 members called up by England for the World Championships in Berlin. In the boxing ring, Merridale BC's Akash Tuqir, 17, was crowned champion at the England Youth Championships in Rotherham.

Halesowen's Laura Barker, 22, became a golden girl in the +70kg category at the British National Pro Jiu Jitsu Championships in London.

In March, 13-year-old Bloxwich jiu jitsu ace Lewis Newman, of Simkin Martial Arts Academy in Walsall, struck gold in the Pan-American Championships in class two of medium heavyweight division at Long Beach, California.

Wodensborough Boxing Club's Lauren Johnson landed the English middleweight title.

Dudley electrician Scott Palmer was called up to represent Great Britain at the European Sprint Duathlon in Germany. Year 10 and 11 girls from Coppice Performing Arts School were crowned national futsal champions.

Cannock's Zac Evans was buzzing after winning the EKF European Welterweight title, defeating Jean Marie Pierak at the Lincoln Fight Factory. April saw the covers come off Springhill Cricket Club's new pavilion, while girl power ruled on a historic night for the Wolverhampton Sunday Football League as four female officials took charge of the Harry Round Cup final for the first time.

Jeweller Aaron Sheldon and auctioneer Ben Gamble with the Wednesbury Charity Cup

Halesowen Athletic Club honoured their most famous runner. A plaque was unveiled in Somers Square while the drive at the Abbey Stadium was named after Jack Price, who ran in the 1908 Olympic marathon in London and led the formation of the club in the 1920s.

Former England rugby captain and RFU chairman Bill Beaumont was guest of honour at a special dinner to commemorate Willenhall Rugby Club's 50th anniversary.

Women's world snooker champion Reanne Evans lifted the Staffs and West Midlands League Individual Championship in May. Wodensborough BC's Benjamin Whittaker, 18, lifted the England Elite middleweight title, days after selection for the England podium squad. Snooker star Mark Allen checked into Bilston's Golden Cue club to help pocket £2,500 for Dudley Mind and the Deanesley Centre at New Cross Hospital.

Stourbridge karate ace Liam Reynolds was crowned an English champion at the age of 10. Meanwhile, 3 Hammers Golf claimed the Critchley Award from the Golf Foundation for its work in encouraging youngsters to take up the sport.

Walking football took centre stage at Molineux, while Wednesbury 11-year-olds Amillia Baker and Kirsty Maull smashed their way to a national table tennis title. Former world champion Ken Doherty was the guest of honour at the Stourbridge Snooker League annual awards night. Penn Cricket Club took the wraps off their new £70,000 clubhouse and £25,000 state-of-the-art net facility.

Legendary football scout Les Green called time on his days of talent spotting at the age of 77.

Another former snooker champion, John Parrott, was guest of honour for the Staffs and West Midlands League awards night. Priory Park Boxing Club's new-look gym was opened in the presence of MP Ian Austin.

Wolverhampton University's Walsall campus was the venue for the Black Country School Games, featuring more than 1,400 youngsters.

Cyril Hockham took to the green at Willenhall Trinity Bowls Club to celebrate his 100th birthday in July.

Fordhouses under-13 cricketers were the pride of Staffordshire, becoming Nat West Club County champions.

The Dudley & Cradley Heath League was forced to blow the final whistle after a 106 years of competition.

Another local football league, the Wolverhampton Combination, admitted defeat in its battle to continue, after 113 years.

Powered

Halesowen Cricket Club landed their first major piece of silverware in 14 years in September, lifting the WCB Canterbury Cup at New Road.

Willenhall Trinity Bowls Club clinched their first-ever Staffordshire club competition, while Burntwood's Last Chance Saloon powered to the Great Britain Tug of War Federation Championship.

Landywood player Jack Harris potted his way to victory over snooker legend Jimmy White in a charity exhibition at Bilston's Golden Cue for the Paul Hunter Foundation.

In October, former New Zealand cricketer Jeremy Coney was the guest of honour as Netherton Cricket Club rounded off their 150th anniversary year with a dinner at Dudley's Village Hotel.

Aldridge cricketer Robert Steadman, a 16-year-old all-rounder, was named Young Volunteer of The Year at the NatWest Outstanding Service to Cricket Awards at Lord's.

In November. Burntwood racer Lloyd Shelley defended his Formula 600 title and winning the Sound of Thunder Class, while Kamila Czartolomna's powerboating success reaped reward for South Staffs SC in December.

Wood Green Athletic were celebrating a £1,000 windfall thanks to the sale of te 136-year-old Wednesbury Cup at auction. Willenhall Rugby Club stalwart Elfyn Pugh was honoured with a lifetime achievement award by the RFU.

John Cheetham, Ian Bonser, Rob Bluck, Harrison Worley and Will Dunn, of 3 Hammers golf complex

Officials Lucy Berridge, Zoe Barch, Lisa-Maria Lane and Emily Aldridge line up for the Harry Round Cup Final

Sport

Taking look back at 2016's grassroots achievements

Page 35

Banks's turns into boxing battleground

ERROL Johnson's Black Country Boxing returns to Walsall next month with a four-fight Boxing Dinner Show at the Banks's Stadium.

'Battleground' features a quartet of undefeated boxers on the February 17 card.

Hot Halesowen prospect Lennox Clarke is in action as he looks to secure a title shot in 2017. The 25 year-old is unbeaten in 14 professional contests and has set his sights on a showdown with English Super Middleweight Champion Jahmaine Smyle. 'Dangerous' Clarke was ringside in November when Smyle retained his belt with a split decision victory over Leon McKenzie.

Talented Lichfield flyweight Brad Foster is also in action. 'The Blade' has recorded five straight professional victories since making the switch from kick boxing 12 months ago. The 19-year-old recently signed a three-year promotional contract with Frank Warren and, after securing nine world titles in kickboxing, is looking to reach world level as a boxer. Foster will enjoy a six round tune-up.

Former amateur star Connor Parker will be looking to build on his recent impressive professional debut when he fights in the paid ranks for just the second time. The Swadlincote super lightweight debuted in Tewkesbury in December and will be looking to make waves in the professional ranks in 2017.

West Bromwich light heavyweight prospect Joshua Stokes completes the card. Josh, brother of undefeated middleweight prospect Tom, will make his professional debut after a solid amateur career with Wodensborough ABC.

Standard tickets for 'Battleground', priced at £35, are available by calling the boxers, £60 VIP tickets for tables of 10, with two-course meal, are available by calling Walsall FC on 01922 651414/416.

New rider Ayres his thanks at response from Heathens fans

CRADLEY rider Danny Ayres has been overwhelmed by the welcome from fans since joining the club last month.

Ayres will meet supporters for the first time when he appears on stage at Cradley Heath Liberal Club on Friday, February 3 with a bumper turnout expected.

It promises to be an entertaining evening as the 29-year-old talks about his life and career.

Ayres has made the switch to the Heathens from Kent – and he already has a big fan base in the West Midlands after wooing crowds during guest appearances for the club.

Said Ayres, who has revealed he is ahead of schedule in his recovery from shoulder surgery at the beginning of December: "I've been over the moon with the reaction from the Cradley fans. The support I've got has been great, and there couldn't really have been a better response since it's been announced."

The 'Danny Ayres Show' – hosted by broadcaster Nigel Pearson – starts at 7.30pm and admission is £5 on the door. The club will announce details of their meet the team night at the event.

Cricket club mourns batting legend

Legend Fred Parkin

THE funeral was taking place this week of one of Netherton Cricket Club's finest batsmen.

Club legend Fred Parkin passed away at the age of 98. Along with fellow run-getter Sid Allport, he was a dominant force at the Highbridge Road club in the 1960s

Fred was also a well-known figure at Dudley Golf Club having turned to the fairways when he ended his playing days with Netherton at the age of 55.

Born in Jacksdale, Nottinghamshire, Fred moved to Dudley in 1958 to become deputy head at Holly Hall School. After seeing his dream of becoming a pilot dashed, he served as a PE instructor before spending four years in Port Elizabeth, South Africa helping injured and wounded servicemen with their rehabilitation.

He returned to England and after a teaching spell in Norfolk he moved to the Black Country with his wife Edwina, son Jeremy and daughter Diane. He began playing for Netherton in 1959.

Jeremy said: "He liked rugby and football but cricket was his first love and he loved playing for Netherton. He averaged over 50 for Netherton and won the batting award on numerous occasions." Jeremy, 65, who also played for Netherton and has served as secretary, added: "From what I have read and from what I have been told he was one of the best batsman on the local cricket scene in the 1960s.

"My dad and Sid Allport were very good friends and were a formidable pairing out in the middle."

The pair shared a record second-wicket stand of 206 in 1961 with Fred scoring the first century recorded on the club's new scoreboard. His funeral was taking place at Gornal Crematorium on Tuesday.

BOSS LOOKS UP AS DREAM ENDS

Wycombe Wanderers 2 Stourbridge 1

PROUD boss Gary Hackett hailed Stourbridge's Cup heroes after their fairytale ended and declared: "Now let's win promotion."

Adebayo Akinfenwa's late winner saw the Glassboys' historic run halted at the third round in front of more than 2,000 travelling supporters.

Hackett, whose team had dumped out League One Northampton in the previous round, hopes his players can now take their form into the battle for promotion from the Evo-Stik Northern Premier Division, *writes Matt Maher*.

"We have a level headed bunch of players and they know what is needed now," he said. "We have to make sure we get in the play-offs at worst. Our aim at the start of the season was promotion and that is still it."

Stour looked destined to claim at least a replay when Dan Scarr cancelled out Sam Wood's opener 20 minutes from time.

Settled

Skipper Tom Tonks hit the underside of the bar before Akinfenwa settled the tie in the League Two side's favour with a late header.

Tonks, meanwhile, believes the Glassboys – playing in the third round for the first time in their 140-year history – delivered everything but the result. "Obviously we are a little bit gutted," he said. "But we have now matched a Football League team twice in the FA Cup. I could not have asked for anything more than the result."

So, the fairytale might be over but if you needed to see what the Cup run has done for Stourbridge, you only had to look at the stands which filled with their supporters and delivered a deafening noise long before kick-off.

Things reached a crescendo when Scarr dragged the Glassboys level with 20 minutes to go, cancelling out the early second half opener. But Akinfenwa took advantage of the only space afforded to him all afternoon by Stour's defence to head home a winner for the Chairboys seven minutes from time.

Attentions will now turn back to Stourbridge's battle for promotion from the Evo-Stik Northern Premier and they head to Skelmersdale on Saturday.

Dan Scarr slots home the Stourbridge equaliser during the FA Cup third round tie at Wycombe

Yeltz fail to Buck losing trend

Halesowen Town 2 Buxton 4

OUT of form Halesowen crashed to a dismal defeat against ten-man Buxton, despite taking an early lead.

Kaiman Anderson turned home a 30th minute rebound to put Halesowen ahead after Buxton's former Wolves goalkeeper Jan Budtz saved from Jordan Goddard. Matters looked even more grave for the visitors just four minutes later when Brad Grayson was given a straight red card for dissent to the officials.

But 10-man Buxton then introduced livewire substitute Jamie Jackson and he stunned the home crowd into disbelief by hitting two goals in six minutes to give Buxton a surprising half-time lead, before creating two further second-half goals as the Yeltz fell apart. Jackson slammed home a great finish from the right with his first touch of the game to level after 39 minutes and Jackson then put Buxton 2-1 ahead in the 45th minute as he held off Liam Slade to slot another fine finish down the centre.

The Bucks made it a remarkable 3-1 in the 51st minute with Jackson causing the damage once again as he fired at goalkeeper John Bateman, allowing Greg Young to bundle home the loose ball.

Asa Charlton touched home to reduce the arrears at 3-2 in the 72nd minute after Budtz made a complete hash of substitute Matt Birley's freekick. But dangerman Jackson completed Halesowen's misery by providing table-topping Buxton's fourth goal in the final minute as he surged down the right and squared for fellow substitute Nicky Walker to turn home.

Tigers are mauled by six-try Stour

Sheffield Tigers 17 Stourbridge 40

STOUR blew away their opponents with a six-try performance and another goal-kicking masterclass from Luke White.

Their opponents rallied but it was too little, too late as Stour secured a bonus-point victory to keep them in touch with the top of the National 2 North table.

The opening phases saw Tigers retain the ball for several phases, but a floated pass wide right saw grateful winger Josh Trinham intercept and outrun the cover over 70m.

The second try came from No.8 Ciaran Moore, fed by Nigel Mukarati and the third came via the same combination, giving Stour a 21-0 lead at the interval.

Trinham secured the bonus point try before Stour rang the changes off the subs bench. But their game lost shape and they shipped a try when centre James Broadley secured a turnover and eluded several tackles. Tigers started to throw the ball around chasing the game but a stray pass near the Stour tryline was picked off by winger Dan Rundle who burnt off the chasers to run 95m and score unhindered.

As the clock ran down the game opened up, Tigers' replacement Will Bennett scoring their second try. Centre colleague Jon Buchanan's chip through then produced a second try for Broadley.

With the final whistle imminent Stour scrum half Joe Heatley broke clean through, the cover reaching him near the Sheffield 22 but he had already offloaded to Trinham. He drew the remaining cover and fed veteran player coach Rod Petty who bounded over.

This weekend Stour make another trip up the M1 for a first ever visit to Scunthorpe. At Stourton Park, Stourbridge Lions have a North Midlands Shield tie against local rivals Kidderminster Carolians, ko 2.15pm.

'Yozza' through to second round tie

TIPTON'S Jamie Hughes comprehensively made it through to the second round of the BDO World Championship as he saw off Martin Atkins at Lakeside.

The 30-year-old dropped a set after striking first blood early on but peeled away to secure his passage through on Sunday night, writes Craig Birch.

The fourth seed kept his head and fired in four 180s along the way, averaging 94.38 to his fellow England international's 88.68.

The Black Country thrower will now take on Jim Williams in round two. He whitewashed Tony O'Shea 3-0 in the first round for the second year in a row.

★★★

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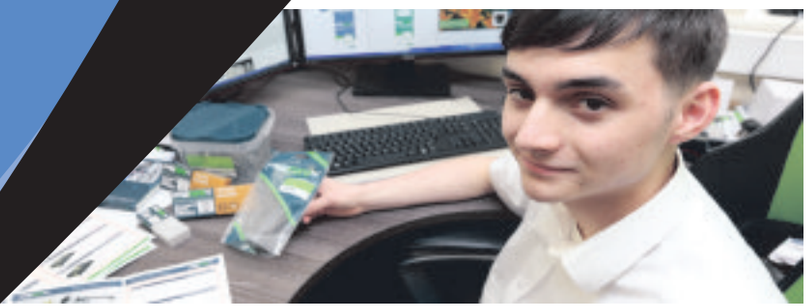

Construction Centre launch completes Stourbridge College refurbishment

Stourbridge College completed its £8 million investment in its facilities with the opening of a new construction centre. State of-the-art carpentry, electrical and plumbing workshops have been developed to support industry skills shortages and train students for local jobs.

Qualifications begin at Level 1 (pre-GCSE) with students able to work towards higher level construction Apprenticeships and university-level (HNC) courses. These are aimed at carpentry trades and jobs as electricians and plumbers, with the potential to train to be architects, engineers and construction process managers.

The construction centre enables the college to provide an additional 350 places to local students.

Gill Coldicott, Head of Stourbridge College said: "All our training and qualifications provide in-demand skills that ensure learners are job-ready. We've recognised the growth in Apprenticeships and continue to work with many employers looking to recruit staff and develop their existing workforces.

"The construction centre complements other facilities at the college such as our engineering workshops, facilities for health care and early years as well as our IT and library resources. They demonstrate that the college is in an excellent position to provide qualifications and valued skills that will get local people into jobs."

Since 2013, the college has invested in classroom and workshop suites for engineering, science, health, social care and early years, plus IT and library resources.

Apprentice designer is the full package

An apprentice in Cradley Heath has made his mark after designing new packaging for his company's products. Andy McDermott has updated packaging for the company, A Perry and their range of ironmongery and threaded bar.

The 19-year-old is also responsible for creating artwork for the company's product labels, information guides and delivery vehicle livery as well as promotional literature for their stockists and distributors.

"Seeing my designs go live has been a bit strange, but also rewarding as it's the first time I've done something like this," said Andy who is studying Level 3 art and design (graphic design) as part of his Apprenticeship. "I've realised how much hard work is involved in design and branding.

"I haven't worked in this environment before, so everything has been a learning process.

"Everything I work on has a lot of creative potential. It's great."

Current Apprenticeship vacancies can be found on the college website bmet.ac.uk/courses/apprenticeships/apprenticeship-vacancies

Students help to create Christmas for the National Trust

Student artists at Stourbridge College provided a National Trust property with handmade decorations for their Christmas trees. Croome Court in Pershore displayed over 65 decorations on two trees in its mansion rooms which are open to the public.

Lecturer, Juliet May explained: "For the past 12 months we worked with Croome Heritage Trust and Croome National Park to provide unique tree decorations. It has been an excellent opportunity for students to gain work experience. There's been a lot of praise for the decorations and the students themselves have absolutely loved seeing them on the trees."

The students, who are from the Art and Design Centre, Brierley Hill explored Croome Court and its history before taking inspiration from the landscape of Croome Park, designed by Robert Adams and the estate's Long Gallery, designed by Capability Brown. Their decorations also paid tribute to Barbara St John and Maria Gunning who were the two wives of George William Coventry, owner of Croome Court and the 6th Earl of Coventry.

Becky Wilks, National Trust Events Officer said: "The students have done a fantastic job with the decorations. We're very pleased that all their hard work is being admired by so many people. Inviting the students to contribute to Croome Court's seasonal celebrations is a way for us to expose younger generations to the property and its heritage and encourage them to acknowledge the history in their own imaginative way."

The students are on the first year of a UAL Diploma in Art and Design.

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- **Business**
- **Accountancy**
- **Sports**
- **Creative & Digital**
- **Hair & Media Make-up**

At Kidderminster Academy you can study for a career in:

- **Hair & Media Make-up**

STOURBRIDGE COLLEGE

	Start W/C	Finish W/E	Cost	Days / times
DIGITAL & CREATIVE				
Basic Introduction to Film Shoots	20-Feb-17	05-Mar-17	£40	Various
Edit Home Videos (Introduction)	30-Jan-17	12-Feb-17	£40	Various
Intro to Stop Motion Animation	06-Mar-17	12-Mar-17	£40	Various
Intro to Video Editing (Beginners)	16-Jan-17	29-Jan-17	£40	Various
BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL				
AAT Certificate in Accounting Level 2 Part-Time	23-Jan-17	06-Aug-17	£595	Mon 18:00-21:00; Tue 18:00-21:00
ILM Leadership & Team Skills Award	23-Jan-17	05-Mar-17	£90	Thu 18:00-21:00
Starting Your Own Business	23-Jan-17	19-Feb-17	£175	Tue 18:00-21:00
ENGLISH & MATHS				
English Entry - Level 2	30-Jan-17	7-Apr-17	FREE	Various
Maths Entry - Level 2	30-Jan-17	7-Apr-17	FREE	Various
HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE				
Preparing to Work in Adult Social Care Award Level 1	30-Jan-17	05-Mar-17	£150	Various
Preparing to Work in Adult Social Care Award Level 1	27-Feb-17	02-Apr-17	£150	Various
Preparing to Work in Adult Social Care Award Level 1	01-May-17	04-Jun-17	£150	Various
Preparing to Work in Adult Social Care Award Level 1	29-May-17	02-Jul-17	£150	Various
SCIENCE & MEDICAL				
Biology GCSE (Fast Track)	16-Jan-17	18-Jun-17	£362	Tue 17:30-21:00
Pharmaceutical Sciences Certificate Level 2	06-Feb-17	25-Jun-17	£800	Fri 09:00-14:45
SPORT & EXERCISE SCIENCE				
NCFE Fitness Instructing Level 2	27-Feb-17	09-Apr-17	£400	Mon 18:00 - 21:00

KIDDERMINSTER ACADEMY

ENGLISH & MATHS				
English Entry - Level 2	30-Jan-17	7-Apr-17	FREE	Various
Maths Entry - Level 2	30-Jan-17	7-Apr-17	FREE	Various
HOSPITALITY & CATERING				
Bakery Essentials	30-Jan-17	12-Feb-17	£20	Wed 09:30-16:00

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e: ask@bmet.ac.uk

*Calls to this number cost 2p per minute plus your network providers access charge

Stourbridge College
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